

Scoping Paper for
Horizon 2020 work programme 2018-2020
Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation

Important Notice: Working Document

This scoping paper will guide the preparation of the work programme itself. It is a working document not formally endorsed by the Commission, and its content does not in any way prejudge the final decision of the Commission on the work programme.

The adoption and the publication of the work programme by the Commission are expected in October 2017. Only the adopted work programme will have legal value.

Scoping paper for the Horizon 2020 work programme 2018-2020

Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation

1. Context

Policy Context

The divide between EU Member States in terms of research and innovation performance is reflected in respective Framework Programme success and participation rates. The most recent data on the first Horizon 2020 calls for proposals indicate that in terms of budget share, EU-15 countries ("old Member States") received 90% of the EU financial contribution while EU-13 countries ("new Member States") received 4%. This is similar to the situation in FP7.

The specific objective of Part IV of Horizon 2020 "Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation" as defined in the relevant regulations is: *"The aim is to fully exploit the potential of Europe's talent pool and ensure that the benefits of an innovation-led economy are both maximised and widely distributed across the Union in accordance with the principle of excellence"*.

As a result, Horizon 2020 provides specific support for Member States¹ with a weaker performance in research and innovation (R&I) through the activity 'Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation'², to help them strengthen performance and increase participation in EU R&I funding programmes.

The main Widening actions are: 'Teaming', supporting the development of centres of excellence via partnerships with institutions of R&I excellence; 'Twinning', to build on the potential of institutional networking; and 'ERA Chairs', to bring excellent researchers to institutions with high potential. Furthermore, support is provided to connect unexploited pockets of excellence throughout the EU through the networking activities of COST³.

Process for developing the scoping paper

Against the background of the strategic programming exercise for the next Horizon 2020 Work Programme (2018-2020), a systematic process was launched in the first half of 2016 to identify the future strategic priorities for the Widening Part of Horizon 2020. In particular, input was drawn from ideas raised in the context of the dedicated Widening Horizon 2020 Advisory Group that met three times between February and May 2016. Furthermore, relevant 'Widening' stakeholders - representing a diversity of areas including industry, universities, research organisations – have provided valuable input through a dedicated working lunch debate that took place on 17 June 2016. Finally, the Commission services have taken

¹ Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia

² <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/spreading-excellence-and-widening-participation>

³ European Cooperation in Science and Technology : <http://www.cost.eu/>

particular account of the accumulated experiences from managing the first calls in 2014-15 including feedback from applicants and other relevant stakeholders involved in submitting proposals for Widening actions.

Main Conclusions in Widening AG report and stakeholder consultation

The Widening Advisory Group published its [final report](#) on 1 June 2016. The following main recommendations were made by the AG: widening participation while concentrating funding on the pursuit of excellence in research; ensuring that excellent research is better oriented towards the innovation process; contributing to sustainable institutional capacity-building and change during and beyond the funding period; and contributing to education and maximizing the potential of human resources by addressing issues related to gender and age. In addition, certain recommendations were made to improve the ERA Chairs and Twinning actions in the final Work Programme together with some forward looking orientations about the widening challenge in general.

Following the stakeholders consultation lunch that took place on 17 June 2016, an interesting exchange of ideas took place based on a set of guiding questions. The widening challenge was recognised as a pressing issue by everyone, and a variety of diverse ideas were put forward for addressing it in practice.

Gap Analysis

In the course of the analysis made of the previous Widening Work Programmes, it became evident that no gaps were identified in any of the areas mentioned in the Horizon 2020 Specific Programme. In particular, all fields referred to in the Specific Programme (namely Teaming, Twinning, ERA Chairs, COST, Policy Support Facility⁴ and network of Widening NCPs) were either covered in the first Widening Work Programme or in both the 2014-15 and 2016-17 Work Programmes.

2. Strategic orientations for 2018-2020 and translation into calls

The Juncker Commission sets out [ten policy priorities](#) on which the EU needs to focus its efforts over the course of its five year mandate. Research and innovation constitute major drivers to boost growth and jobs and to both stimulate and leverage investment, providing new solutions and the knowledge that will help deliver this Commission's agenda. Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation Carlos Moedas has emphasised the importance of 'Open innovation', 'Open science' and being 'Open to the world'. Furthermore, in order to strengthen our economies, we need to address urgent investment needs in research and innovation, linking them to the goals of the Innovation Union and the ERA priorities.

⁴ Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta, Slovakia and Romania have already benefited from PSF support.

Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation falls squarely within the scope of the above political priorities and is particularly crucial for meeting the ERA objectives, by promoting excellence across Europe, reducing disparities and moving a step closer towards true ERA integration. Articulation of this action with other EU policies and in particular Cohesion Policy should be further strengthened.

Translation into calls for 2018-20

For the 2018-20 Work Programme, there will be new calls for two out the three main Widening instruments, namely Twinning and ERA Chairs. For the Teaming flagship instrument, there will not be a new Phase 1 call (but only a Phase 2 restricted call linked to the Phase 1 calls of 2014 and 2017 respectively) due to the restricted funding available under the Widening budget line. The lessons learnt from the first round of Widening calls will be taken into account when preparing the 2018-20 calls.

The philosophy of these instruments will be largely maintained in the final Horizon 2020 Work Programme. However, some minor adjustments are being examined in order to improve the measures and also to align them with the evolving political priorities:

ERA Chairs supports universities or research organisations with the objective of attracting and maintaining high quality human resources under the direction of an outstanding researcher and research manager (the 'ERA Chair holder') while, in parallel, institutions should implement the structural changes necessary to achieve excellence on a sustainable basis.

So far a total of 25 ERA Chairs have been appointed: 11 through the FP7 Pilot Call (still conducted under FP7) and a further 14 recruited following the 1st call of Horizon 2020. With the FP7 projects entering now into their 3rd year of implementation, there is already sizeable feedback on the action available from both participants and stakeholders. Globally, the action is positively viewed and considered adequate for the pursuit of its objectives. In particular, the inclusion in proposals of a SWOT analysis of institutions and an Action Plan to address the identified shortcomings and make the institutions ERA compliant has been praised. However, the consultation process demonstrated the need to address in the future WP the difficulties for participants to attract quality candidates for ERA Chairs positions and to ensure a smooth implementation and the sustainability of reforms aimed at ERA compliance and Research Excellence.

To achieve those goals, the possibility of including an "Advanced" Partner from which the ERA Chair holder will be seconded (full-time or part-time), should the proposal be funded, is being explored.

Twining aims towards significantly strengthening a defined field of research in an emerging institution in a 'Widening' country by linking this institution with at least two internationally-leading counterparts in other Member States or Associated Countries. Activities like short-term staff exchanges, expert visits and short-term on-site or virtual training; workshops;

conference attendance; dissemination and outreach will be supported. So far 67 Twinning projects have been funded. They have started in the beginning of 2016 and will run for 3 years. In the consultation process, the issue of brain circulation was highlighted as well as the unexploited potential of young talent in widening countries. Furthermore, the importance of enhancing the impact of Twinning actions was discussed in consultations with stakeholders and the oversubscription of the previous call was also mentioned as a challenge to be addressed.

To tackle the issues above, the following two changes for the next **Twinning call** are being examined:

- 1. To include a strong orientation towards early stage researchers in Widening countries, also in line with the relevant Slovak Presidency priorities.**
- 2. To require partners to concretely show how common research interests link together and will benefit from the Twinning exercise, possibly including information on common research projects in the scientific area of choice running in a parallel and complementary manner to the networking activities covered by the Twinning exercise.**

Other actions:

COST-related actions will continue to be funded with the COST Association being the implementing entity and with the aim to contribute to closing the divide in research and innovation performance in Europe.

COST has committed to spending 50% of the foreseen H2020 total budget⁵ for the benefit of the research communities in the low R&I performing countries as part of its inclusiveness policy. Currently, 300 COST networking actions are on-going managed by the COST Association, which is an international non-profit organisation under Belgian law. Currently, widening countries are participating in 43% of these actions.

Call working title (indicate 'FA' if proposed as a focus area)	Brief description of the scope of the call including information if it is cPPP. If a focus area please show how the criteria have been met.	Possible contribution from and to other work programme parts (mandatory for focus areas)
WIDESPREAD-01: Teaming	Restricted call to successful applicants of previous Teaming Phase 1 calls in view of	N/A

⁵ 300M€ drawn from both Challenge 6 'Inclusive, Innovative and Reflective Societies' and 'Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation' Part of Horizon 2020

Phase 2	submitting a proposal based on a detailed Business Plan for the creation of new centres of excellence or upgrading the existing ones in low R&I performing countries.	
WIDESPREAD-02: Twinning	Twinning aims at strengthening a defined field of research in a university or research organisation from a Widening country by linking it with at least two internationally-leading research institutions in other Member States or Associated Countries.	
WIDESPREAD-03: ERA Chairs	ERA Chairs supports institution in Widening countries to attract high quality researchers and managers while, in parallel, institutions should implement the structural changes necessary to achieve excellence on a sustainable basis.	