

# EU Research Trends - september 2014

It took many by surprise when Margrethe Vestager were appointed the new Danish Commissioner. With the appointments of Donald Tusk as the new Council President and Federica Mogherini as the new High Representative, the distribution of portfolios to individual Commissioners and the new structure with vice-presidents and other Commissioners grouped under them according to their policy responsibilities came in place. Juncker's restructuring of the Commission will delegate some power from the president to the vice-presidents and thereby potentially improve the culture of collegiality within the college of Commissioners.

While Barroso II Commission were saving the banking sector after the financial crisis, the Juncker Commission will be measured on its ability to save the youth, e.g. create jobs to cope with the high rate of youth unemployment, which in some Member States is as high as 50 %.

In his opening statements to the European Parliament, Juncker presented his Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change, including ten policy areas to be tackled. The first one is a new boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment to strengthen Europe's competitiveness and to stimulate investment for the purpose of job creation. By using public funds available at Union level with smarter investment, more focus, less regulation and more flexibility when it comes to the use of these public funds, should allow, according to Juncker, to mobilise up to 300 billion EUR in additional public and private investments in the real economy over the next three years. Second policy area is to create A Connected Digital Single Market, while releasing the enormous potential of digital technologies and boosting digital skills and learning across society and to facilitate the creation of innovative start-ups. Thirdly to reform and reorganize Europe's energy policy into a new European Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy, aiming at the European Energy Union to become the world number one in renewable energies. The fourth policy area where Research and Innovation are of major relevance is A Deeper and Fairer Internal Market with a Strengthened Industrial Base, where industry's weight in the EU's GDP should be brought back to 20 % by 2020 from less than 16 % today.

## Trends

### New EU Commissioner for research

Jean-Claude Juncker appointed Carlos Moedas as the Commissioner candidate for Research, Innovation and Science. Carlos Moedas is former secretary of state in Portugal.

Next to helping promoting the international excellence of EU's research and strengthening research capacities and innovation strategies across all Member States are some of the main priorities highlighted in a [mission letter](#) sent by Juncker to Moedas. One of the new Commissioner's objectives will also be to reinforce Europe's industrial leadership.

## Hearings

The parliamentary hearings began on 29 September and all Commissioners must be approved by 22 October so that the new Commission can enter into office by November 1st. Carlos Moedas' hearing will be held by the ITRE Committee of the European Parliament, responsible for Research and Innovation policy, on 30 September. The ITRE Committee is responsible for hearings of six Commissioners and associated to hearings of another three Commissioners.

## ITRE Committee's opinion on Council's proposal for EU budget

On September 1 and 2<sup>nd</sup> the ITRE Committee adopted [the draft opinion by MEP Jerzy Buzek](#) (EPP, PL), Chair of the ITRE Committee, on the Council's budget proposal for 2015. The Council proposition foresees cuts in the area of innovation, research, infrastructure and SMEs therefore extending cuts in different pluri-annual programmes (Horizon2020, COSME, CEF). The opinion is a strong statement against the proposed 2015 budget by the EU Council. For Jerzy Buzek the preliminary 2015 budget will only have a negative impact of Europe's growth and competitiveness. He strongly advises the Council against any further cuts.

The ITRE Committee members agreed upon the Chair's draft opinion, adding that the lack or delay of budget could put an end to Europe's innovation and competitiveness targets. The Committee concluded that the future budget should continue to drive forward Research and Innovation.

The [draft opinion](#) was adopted with 55 votes in favor, 2 votes against and 4 abstentions.

The Council published on the same day [its position on the 2015 Budget](#). The European Parliament amendments are to be awaited by beginning of October.

## EP and Commission reject Horizon 2020 budget for 2015

The Council proposal to reduce the 2015 budget for the research and innovation framework programme, Horizon 2020, by more than 1 billion EUR, equivalent to an 11 % drop from the initially planned budget, is unacceptable to the European Commission and the European Parliament. Their joint opposition to what they consider to be a disproportionate and dangerous cut was clearly stated on Tuesday 16 September during the plenary session in Strasbourg. The position adopted by the Council at the start of September on the EU budget for 2015 leaves no doubt: Horizon 2020 looks likely to be the programme most adversely

affected by the economy measures. The member states are proposing cuts of 190 million EUR in funding available for new contracts and 981 million EUR to the payments budget for 2015. Italian Secretary of State at the Economy and Finance Ministry Enrico Zanetti argued during the plenary session debate that it was a “balanced and fair” proposal and that the Horizon 2020 budget would still be 33 % higher than in 2014. Neither the Commission nor the Parliament seemed persuaded by this argument, however. Horizon 2020, despite its first work programme having been adopted only in December 2013, is already facing a structural payments deficit, as Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, Commissioner for Research and Innovation, noted during the debate, making this reduction all the less defensible.

The Commission says that the current difficulties already affect some 600 collaborative projects, involving 7,000 participants, including 1,400 SMEs. “Drastic measures” have been put in place, such as reducing funding for pre-payment and delays in calls for offers, in order to address the structural deficit. For 2014, 230 million EUR more is needed and this sum absolutely must be found before the end of the year, said Geoghegan-Quinn. She pointed out that, in 2014 and 2015, 60 % of the payment appropriations will still relate to the previous framework programme (2007-2013). With the Council's current proposal, the Commission will not be able to keep up, as it is already walking a tightrope, she warned. She went on to suggest that, if the proposed 2015 reduction became a trend, Horizon 2020 would find itself with a 40 % commitment appropriations deficit by 2020. The reaction of MEPs was practically unanimous. Funding for this framework programme had to be saved as it is a long-term investment, and the cuts proposed by the Council are not acceptable, stated Krisjanis Karins (EPP, Latvia). The Social Democrats were of the same view. The Commission will not be able to meet its obligations, feared some, like Dan Nica (S&D, Romania). While Ashley Fox (UK), speaking for the ECR Group, railed against the Commission's poor budget management, he nonetheless gave the Commission his support, deeming the Council proposal to be disproportionate compared with cuts proposed elsewhere, to the common agricultural policy, for example, or cohesion funding. The Council is “disappointing” and the reductions “unacceptable”, echoed Nils Torvalds (ALDE, Finland) and Pablo Echenique (GUE/NGL, Spain).

### **Guide to Intellectual Property Rights in Horizon 2020**

Aiming to guide project applicants and participants through the requirements of the European Commission related to intellectual property rights in Horizon 2020 projects, and to offer hands-on advice and tips on how to put IP management into practice, the European IPR Helpdesk has developed a guide covering the basic facts on central intellectual property aspects in Horizon 2020 projects.

This guide could be useful for organisations preparing Eurostars projects, in particular the IP component of Eurostars consortium agreements. IP rights are particularly important to collaborative research projects such as the ones developed in Eurostars.

You can download [the guide to IPR in H2020](#) on the IPR helpdesk's website. More information on [Eurostars consortium agreements](#) can also be found on the programme's website.

### **Social studies and humanities marginalised in Horizon 2020**

The sidelining and marginalisation of the human and social sciences and particularly humanities, as an area of research, in the first work programme (2014-2015) of Horizon 2020 is the main reproach formulated by the Science Europe scientific committee for the humanities in a report published at the beginning of September in response to the choices made by the European Commission.

After closely scrutinising the Horizon 2020 work programme for 2014 and 2015, which the Commission presented in December last year, the Science Europe report (The Human Factor in the 2014-2015 Work Programme of the Horizon 2020 Societal Challenges), drafted by a collective of 15 University and research institute lecturers (Denmark, Hungary, Britain, France, Sweden, Ireland, Iceland, Switzerland, Spain, Finland, Belgium and the Netherlands) delivers a harsh criticism: "We conclude that the actual role of the humanities in the 2014-2015 Work Programme is marginal in quantity as well as quality". This role in the programme is also too often "simplified" because it is perceived as being secondary to other research areas. The analysis carried out by these researchers focused on one of the three pillars in Horizon 2020, "Societal Challenges", which has received a 38.53% allocation from the total framework programme budget, which is around €80 billion. This pillar comprises the following themes: health; agriculture, maritime activities and the bio-economy; energy; transport; climate action, the environment, rational use of resources and raw materials; reflective societies and security. At the time, the committee welcomed it being set up but the final results are far from satisfactory. In this pillar, as devised by the first work programme, just 26.7% of themes clearly open the way to contributions from the social sciences and humanities. Humanities, which cover disciplines such as philosophy, history and linguistics, are even more marginalised and only account for 10% of these themes. From a qualitative point of view the report issues a similar criticism: "Finally, the Work Programme hardly refers at all to cultural and historical dimensions" because the majority of themes chosen constitute the variation of one and the same thematic geared towards technologies, particularly information and communication technologies (ICT). The omission of these two dimensions, according to the report, is the equivalent of failing to find "radically new approaches to the development and application of technological or social processes" that are needed to "better understand the changes they bring to people's behaviour, pervasive values, cultures of practice and modes of communication". By failing to take into account historic and cultural perspectives, is to ultimately reject analyses on pre-conditions of human behaviour, even though analysis of human behaviour and how to influence it are the most pervasive areas of research in the work programme or at least in areas where social sciences and humanities are still called on to make a contribution.

## EU 'single market for research' now depends on national reforms, study finds

The ERA partnership between Member States, research stakeholders and the Commission has made good progress in delivering ERA. The conditions for achieving a [European Research Area \(ERA\)](#), where researchers and scientific knowledge can circulate freely, are in place at the European level. Reforms must now be implemented at the Member State level to make ERA work.

This is the main conclusion of the latest [ERA progress report](#), presented by the European Commission. The report updates last year's overview and presents individual country reports that give a snapshot of implementation on the ground, notably at the level of research organisations.

European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Máire Geoghegan-Quinn said: *"We have made good progress on the European Research Area in recent years. It is now up to Member States and research organisations to make good on their commitments and put in place the necessary reforms. The Commission will help where it can, including with the 80 billion EUR investment from our new research and innovation programme, Horizon 2020. In particular, national and EU research efforts need to be much more closely aligned if we are to increase impact at EU level."*

The following initiatives announced in the ERA Communication have been firmly established:

- Member States are increasingly adopting measures in support of ERA, and reflecting them in their national reform programmes;
- The EU has embedded ERA in the European semester. It also provides substantial funding for ERA measures, for instance promoting open recruitment, open access to publications and data as well as gender equality through Horizon 2020;
- Research organisations such as research funders and research-performing institutions have shown strong support for the ERA agenda;
- An ERA Monitoring Mechanism has been set up and is delivering increasingly strong data to evaluate performance at the Member State and institutional level.

The analysis confirms that the conditions for the completion of ERA that the Commission [identified](#) in 2012 are in place.

At the same time differences still remain at Member State and institutional level. For example, while competitive project-based funding occurs in all Member States, the extent of it varies significantly between countries. And while more than half of the Member States have initiatives in place supporting gender equality in research, the pace of real change is too slow. While the report concludes that there is no single path to achieving ERA, it is also clear that ERA is most effective and beneficial when national measures are in place.

Member States are due to put forward 'ERA Roadmaps' by mid-2015, which will outline their next steps towards ERA implementation. The Commission, research stakeholder organisations and Member States will meet in Brussels in March 2015 to take stock.

The ERA progress report is available [here](#)

Facts and figures are available [here](#)

### **Switzerland associated to parts of Horizon 2020**

On 15 September the European Commission published an update regarding association of Switzerland to parts of the Horizon 2020 programme, including access to the European Research Council (ERC) funding. Pending the finalisation of required procedures on the EU and Switzerland's side, it is expected that the Agreement associating Switzerland to parts of Horizon 2020 could be signed later this year and will produce effects from 15 September 2014. Under this assumption the ERC candidates of any nationality with a host institution based in Switzerland can now apply for the ERC competitions with deadlines from 15 September 2014. The ERC 2014 Proof of Concept call (deadline 1 October 2014) and the 2014 Advanced grants call (deadline 21 October 2014) are hence open to them.

For more information, visit the Participant Portal or read the [agreement's summary](#)

### **Medical researchers in Europe are facing new challenges over access to clinical trials data, according to the European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly.**

The Ombudsman warning came just month after the EU adopted a [new clinical trials regulation](#), which obliges pharmaceutical companies to share scientific data on new medications submitted for approval to the European Medicines Agency (EMA). O'Reilly said scientific data on clinical trials should be made more transparent, for the benefit of patients, doctors and researchers who need "maximum information about the medicines they take, prescribe and analyse". The EU Ombudsman, who took office a year ago, held a debate in the European Parliament on Monday (29 September) on the matter with representatives of the pharmaceutical sector, MEPs, health campaigners and the European Medicines Agency (EMA). In May, [she sent an open letter](#) to the EMA's executive director Guido Rasi, expressing concern about a significant change to the agency's draft transparency policy on clinical trials. The EMA is responsible for evaluation of the safety of medicines before they enter the market, and for monitoring the drugs that are already on the market. The EMA has proposed that future access to clinical trials results should be available "on screen only" for researchers. This version would exclude the possibility of researchers being able to print, distribute, or transfer the information, making scientific analysis of clinical study data "highly problematic" according to critics. EMA will hold a management board meeting on Thursday (2 October) to adopt its [new pro-active transparency policy](#).

Please find enclosed the updated calendar with relevant events and seminars.

Comments or questions should be directed to [Rikke Edsjö](#)