



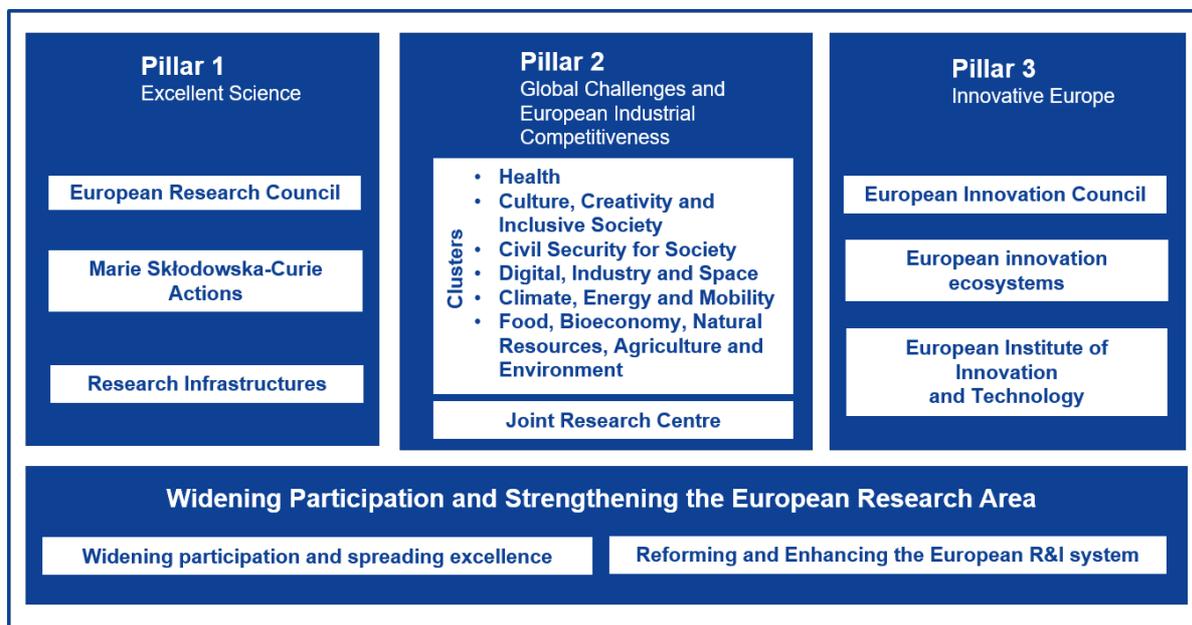
20 March 2020

Horizon Europe – the next EU research and innovation framework programme 2021-2027

This document provides a summary of the main news in the next EU framework programme, as well as an outline of the next steps in the process of developing and implementing the programme.

Structure

The existing three-pillar structure will be maintained, as per the illustration.



Pillar I: Excellent Science

The excellence pillar will largely remain untouched in its structure, compared to Horizon 2020. It will still be a bottom-up instrument consisting mainly of individual grants.

Within MSCA, the instruments will receive new names, which are intended to make it more explanatory what they are about (current name in brackets):

1. *Doctoral Training Networks* (Innovative Training Networks)
2. *Postdoctoral Fellowships* (Individual Fellowships)
3. *Staff Exchanges* (Research and Innovation Staff Exchange)
4. *Synergies* (Co-funding of regional, national and international programmes)
5. *European Researchers' Festivals* (European Researchers' Night)

Well aware of how heavily oversubscribed a programme such as MSCA is, the Commission is currently exploring options to better manage the demand. This may include restrictions on resubmissions for those with low scores.

Pillar II: Global challenges

The majority of the budget (60%) is proposed to be allocated to Pillar II, which is a merger of the current societal challenges pillar, and parts of the pillar for industrial leadership. This pillar will still finance collaborative research projects, where it will be increasingly important to involve partners from different sectors, both research and innovation, from academia as well as public sector, companies and other end users of new research. The basic general rule of at least three partners from three member states will continue to apply.

Up to 10% of the budget for the second pillar will be dedicated to missions. Read more on missions below.

At this point, what we have as background information on the various clusters is sections from a draft “orientations towards the first strategic plan for HEU” document. This document gives an outline of the planned impacts to be achieved through the programme by 2030. As such, it gives a general idea about where research will be focused, without going as far yet as listing calls. It is therefore recommended background reading, whilst waiting for the (draft) work programmes to arrive.

1. [Health](#)
2. [Culture, creativity and inclusive society](#)
3. [Civil security for society](#)
4. [Digital, industry and space](#)
5. [Climate, energy and mobility](#)
6. [Food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment](#)

Pillar III: European Innovation Council (EIC)

The third pillar contains the most news compared to the current programme. EIC is an attempt to create an equivalent of the ERC for innovators, where the focus is on radical breakthrough market-creating innovation. The EIC will consist of two parts: *Pathfinder* and *Accelerator*. While *Accelerator* will focus on scale-up and is mainly intended for SMEs, there are opportunities for researchers within the *Pathfinder*, which includes early development stages such as proof-of-concept. *Pathfinder* will provide financing via grants. Opportunities for university researchers within the Pathfinder is specifically mentioned in the legal text of Horizon Europe.

Within pillar III the EIT will also be placed. There are plans for a future *Innovation Community (KIC)* within the area of *cultural and creative industries*. This is expected to be launched in 2022, with the call launching in 2021.

Missions

Another news in HEU are the so called *missions*. These are based on the concept of mission-driven research, which was proposed by the advisor to the Commission, Mariana Mazzucato, as well as the concept of ‘moon shots’. These will be shaped jointly by the Commission, member states and civil society. The Commission explains missions as something that is not primarily about research and innovation, but about delivering a public good. There is a clear focus on achieving tangible results by 2030.

An agreement has been reached over five mission areas:

- *Adaptation to climate change, including societal transformation*
- *Cancer*
- *Healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters*
- *Climate-neutral and smart cities*
- *Soil health and food*

For each of these mission areas a *mission board* has been appointed, following a call for expressions of interest. The mission boards, which are effectively expert advisory groups to the Commission, have been

tasked with coming up with a specific mission for each area. A second task will be to advise on the development of work programmes with relevance to the missions. The work with identifying missions are proving more difficult than expected for the boards, and so their deadline has been postponed until May 2020. These missions will then be integrated into the strategic plan for HEU, and work programmes will be developed accordingly. The mission board that has progressed the fastest is the one on cities. This board has suggested a mission of [*100 climate-neutral cities by 2030 – by and for the citizens*](#).

There will not be separate work programmes for missions, but our understanding is that certain calls within pillar II will be flagged as contributing to certain missions. Calls within ERC and MSCA will still be fully bottom-up, but those projects that touch upon a mission topic may be used as contributing to the overall mission. It is still unclear how this will happen practically. It has been said that max 10% of the pillar II budget will be allocated to missions. It is therefore important to underline that the majority of HEU will not be dedicated to the missions, and 'classic' call for proposals will still be the norm in pillar II.

The Commission, or at least DG RTD, is also keen to stress that it is hoped that not only HEU will fund the missions. The political backing of the mission concept is hoped to result in national efforts also being directed towards missions.

Partnership programmes

The Commission has proposed consolidating the large number of institutionalised partnership programmes with industry that exist in connection to the framework programme. There is currently around 120 such programmes. For Horizon Europe, 49 candidates for partnerships have been put forward and are currently being evaluated and fully developed. ([See a summary of the 49 candidates](#)) There are candidate partnerships which relate to clusters 1, 4, 5 and 6. Member states, including Sweden, are yet to declare which partnerships they wish to join, and thereby co-fund. Among the 49 are some that are roughly continuations of existing partnerships, whereas others are mergers or new initiatives.

International cooperation

The Commission's ambition is to make HEU more 'open to the world', where more third countries can associate with the programme. The Commission has expressed an ambition of having 30+ countries associated with HEU. Negotiations to achieve this can only start once the legal text of HEU has been adopted. A number of countries have already indicated an interest in association, e.g. Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa and USA (although the USA has also expressed concern over where negotiations are going and has recently poured scepticism over its intention to associate). As an associated country, they get full access to the programme and pay a contribution into the budget. An important principle in the new programme is that associated countries must give mutual access to their research programmes to actors from the EU. China will not be considered for association, as the country does not meet the essential criteria of being a democracy.

Negotiations between the EU institutions concerning international cooperation are still ongoing, for example whether all of HEU should be open to participation from third countries. There are some in the Parliament who wants to limit access to the ERC and the EIC. The Commission prefers leaving it as open as possible, but has also said that access to the EIC will be assessed on a case by case basis.

The UK government has expressed a clear intention of wanting to associate with HEU as of 2021. These negotiations will start now on 2 March, together with the wider negotiations on the future partnership between the EU and the UK. The UK will remain a partner of Horizon 2020 until the end of the programme. Future participation is dependent on the conclusion of a deal with the EU. The messages we have heard so far is that the EU would prefer to only conclude one comprehensive agreement with the UK, and not to do many separate deals, for example on research and innovation. The purpose of this is to limit the possibility of 'cherry picking' from the British side.

What happens now?

In March 2019, a partial agreement was reached between the EU institutions on the legal texts that constitute the framework programme – a Regulation covering the rules of participation, and a Decision covering the programme content. The agreement covers everything apart from the budget, international cooperation and synergies with other EU programmes.

Negotiations on the remaining items are yet to start in the newly elected Parliament, or in the Council. This is due to lack of agreement on the overall EU budget for 2021-2027, which prevents progress being made on individual programmes. Member States in the Council are still too far apart from each other to reach an agreement on the budget, and failed doing so at the latest EU summit on 20-21 February.

In the Commission's original proposal, 83,5 billion € has been allocated to HEU. The latest rejected compromise at the summit contained 80,9 billion € for HEU. This shall be seen in correlation to the current budget for Horizon 2020, recounted for 27 Member States, which is at 64,7 billion €. As for the Parliament, they have demanded a budget of 120 billion € for HEU. The EP must approve the EU budget as a whole, but they do not have the competence to change individual budget lines. The EP is threatening to reject the budget if their demands of a larger budget is not met.

The partial agreement has allowed the Commission to start the technical programming of HEU. The first step is to develop a strategic plan for HEU, which will be a document covering the first 4 years of HEU. It will give more detail as to the direction of the research, and which impacts that can be foreseen from the funded activities of HEU. The strategic plan will in particular cover the second pillar, missions and partnerships, but also horizontal aspects such as gender, the role of SSH, ethics. A draft "[orientations towards the first strategic plan for HEU](#)" document was published in December 2019. In May-June 2019 a public consultation took place asking for input to the shaping of the strategic plan. [Lärosäten Syd responded](#) to this consultation.

Next steps

- March and April 2020 – possible dates for a second (and third), hopefully decisive, summit to agree on the overall EU budget 2021-2027
- 22-24 September 2020 – *EU Research & Innovation Days* in Brussels – the second version of this conference, which was launched in 2019 as an annual event. It is an opportunity to discuss directly with the Commission on future EU R&I policy and programmes. The conference is part of the co-creation process that the Commission is championing to make the development of the new programme more inclusive.
- May/June 2020 – Deadline to mission boards to present missions, in order for them to be included in the strategic plan.
- Summer 2020 – Publication of the strategic plan for HEU, together with drafts of the first work programmes 2021-2022, containing information about the first calls. This date may be delayed, however.
- Q4 2020 – Formal publication of HEU work programmes 2021-2022.
- February 2021 – latest indications about when the first calls for proposals would open, with a deadline later in spring. A delay is most likely to affect pillar II, whereas pillars I and III are more or less ready to go.

Rickard Eksten

Lärosäten Syd, Brussels representative & Senior EU Policy Officer