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ETUCE Reaction on the proposal on Horizon Europe Programme (2021-2027)

Adopted by ETUCE Committee on 8-9 October, 2018

EUROPEAN REGION-

ETUCE

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The European Commission published a [Proposal for a Regulation on establishing Horizon Europe –the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation](#) in June 2018. The proposal presents the priorities of the programme for the next mandate period 2021-2027 in accordance with the Commission's priorities on jobs, growth, fairness and democratic change and global policy priorities, including the Sustainable Development Goals, to support research and innovation with a budget of 100 billion Euros. In comparison, the budget of the Horizon2020 programme (2014-21) was 77 billion Euros.

1. We welcome that the ongoing Horizon2020 Programme (2014-2021) has so far supported 340.000 **researchers**. However, with respect to supporting researchers' career prospects, the present proposal is a step back from the objectives of the previous programme, Horizon2020. We note that Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions aim to improve institutional and national recruitment, as well as training and career development systems for researchers; however, this is not sufficient. We recall that Horizon2020 had specific objectives to support researchers' career development and put special emphasis on the implementation of the **European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers**¹. In relation to the previous programme we previously requested² the Commission to put this charter in the heart of the financing programme. We repeat our demand that when decisions are made about funding of research through the ongoing and future programme, **this charter should be taken into consideration and require from projects / institutions funded** to prove that they incorporated the Charter and Code of Conduct in their policies. Ideally, it should be one of criteria taken into consideration and used when decisions on funding are made in connection with the Horizon Europe programme.
2. The proposal of the Horizon Europe Programme is also based on the European Commission's Communication entitled [A renewed European agenda for research and innovation](#) (2018) which proposes **3% of EU's GDP to be dedicated to research and development**. The Communication acknowledges that public and private investment in the European countries do not sufficiently cover the required



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¹ <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter>

² <https://www.csee-etuice.org/images/attachments/StatementHorizon2020EN.pdf>

necessary research and innovations, therefore it **encourages more private investment in research**. We regret that the Horizon2020 programme favours private companies while the programme's budget is essentially composed of the citizens' money and should contribute to **public research and societal issues**. According to the European Commission's evaluation³, during the period of 2014-2016, 38% of secondary and higher education institutions presented eligible applications for projects, while 36% of the grants were given to private for profit companies, and only 18% of the applications from research organisations and 4% from public bodies obtained grants. We are strongly concerned that the proposal for a Horizon Europe Programme and the political objectives that the proposal is based upon are supporting even more **business-oriented research** and will contribute to the **marketisation of publicly financed research institutions**. We demand that more grants should be provided to public research institutions and universities. We observe that **applications of public universities and public research centres** may not be successful because of lack of finances for equipment and tools to support further research.

3. **We demand that EU countries be required to make sustainable investments in public research in the framework of the European Semester process, refraining from further privatisation of academic research.** In addition, we demand that Horizon Europe funds should not be used to replace missing national budget in public research. In countries where Research & Development are less developed, governments must retain or increase the level of direct national investments in R&D in order to be eligible for Horizon Europe funds and projects. This is essential for further development of research and innovation by Horizon Europe budget.
4. Although the Commission reports an increase of the budget to €100 billion compared to €77 billion for the previous Horizon 2020 programme, ETUCE does not agree that this can be considered a real increase to support research if it is merged with several new **innovation objectives**. In addition, Horizon Europe focuses to a great extent on innovation, however, ETUCE underlines that innovation does not necessarily mean research. Also, we request that **innovation be linked to social sciences** and support research under this proposal for example on education and human rights. The proposal should support the implementation of other European Commission policies by ensuring research on education policy in connection with **the future EU-level education and training policies, and the European Education Area 2025**. We strongly believe that the suggestions of the European Commission to improve early childhood education, key competences, language learning, teaching with innovative tools should be implemented with the help of the Horizon Europe Programme budget.

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https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/sites/horizon2020/files/h2020_threeyearson_a4_horizontal_2018_web.pdf

5. We regret that one of the main objectives of the programme is **industry-based research and innovation**. The previously mentioned Communication suggests investing in skills at all levels and empowering **European universities to become more entrepreneurial and interdisciplinary**” with the aim to develop a learning and “entrepreneurial society” because of the “skills mismatch” between education and the labour market. This document, which stands as the background of the programme proposal, also suggests that universities establish more **cooperation with business** and civil society organisations in order to boost more business ideas, start-ups and spin-offs.
6. We regret this short-term vision of the European Commission concerning the aim of education and blaming the higher education sector for **skills mismatch** and for not fulfilling the imminent needs of the labour market. **We object to such a view being supported with the budget of the future Horizon Europe Programme**. We have stressed in several of our statements that **preparing graduates for non-predictable jobs** requires an impossible task from higher education if the focus remains limited to the short-term target of teaching students “for the current labour market”. We point out that the [CEDEFOP: Matching skills and jobs in Europe \(2015\)](#) report proved that companies need to provide jobs with appropriate salaries and working conditions via fair recruitment in order to find the right candidate for the job and avoid “skills mismatch”. We also stress that according to the European Commission’s Key Competence Framework⁴ reviewed in 2018 **entrepreneurship competence** goes beyond merely establishing businesses.
7. We underline that **education is a fundamental human right** conceived to give the opportunity to all students regardless of their socio-economic and cultural background to enhance their chances for a good life, decent employment and participation in the democratic life of a country and have a key role in fostering mutual understanding and respect for others. Therefore, focusing narrowly on **the short-sighted target of education and research** will undermine the institutional **autonomy of universities, academic freedom in teaching and research** and in a broader sense will limit the **freedom of science and research**. Moreover, it will undermine teaching about equality and ensuring inclusion of all in the democratic organization of our countries.
8. We regret that from the whole budget approximately only 2 billion Euros are allocated to strengthen the **European Research Area**. We support that the biggest portion of the budget (28,8 billion Euros) - under the “Open Science” pillar of the fund - will be allocated to the European Research Council (ERC), which supports and increases the **possibilities of postdoctoral researchers** to do research in Europe, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and research infrastructures. Likewise, while we welcome that the second pillar of this programme focuses on Global Challenges and includes an **inclusive** and secure society as one of its main

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/swd-recommendation-key-competences-lifelong-learning.pdf>

objectives, we regret that such a small portion of the budget has been allocated to this topic (€2.8 million).

9. We support the **mobility of early career researchers and researchers** in Europe, but we demand that **hosting institutions respect the employment conditions of mobile researchers**. The engagement of early stage researchers and researchers in EU funded projects should not result in an increase of **short-term temporary contracts** in universities and other research institutes. ETUCE repeats the previous request to the European Commission to promote decent working conditions and permanent employment in science and consider establishing a monitoring mechanism on how many **temporary contract researchers** can be engaged in research projects. We regret that several researchers are contracted only for the period of the projects under temporary contracts, which the European Commission should not accept when receiving applications.
10. We underline that many staff and financial resources are invested in project applications of which in the end only 48.4% received grants during 2014-2016, according to the European Commission's report⁵. This means that a considerable amount of **working time of the researchers are invested** into applications to grants which are not successful. We strongly believe that the European Commission should provide further training to potential beneficiaries to submit quality applications.
11. We welcome that among the priorities the European Commission mentions **values, inclusive and democratic societies**. We note that Horizon Europe will focus on ensuring the **effectiveness of research**. At the same time, ETUCE calls for ensuring and safeguarding **freedom of research** focusing on **social dimension and European citizenship in the European Research Area** in order to improve democracy in Europe, to develop critical analysis of society, to prepare for the future, and to challenge global problems. We demand that the fund support the implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**.
12. We notice that **humanities and large sectors of social sciences** do not have a distinct role among the objectives of the programme and these objectives were also missing from the Horizon2020 programme. However, we believe that strengthening the research activities in those sectors must be included. We urge the European Commission to recognise that the **improvement of basic and applied research in these fields** as well as their interaction with other scientific areas should be well established and reinforced.
13. We support the **simplification of the application to the future Horizon Europe** grants to widen participation. However, instead of broadening the programme towards more **entrepreneurs**, we request that it be **more inclusive towards researchers**.

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https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/sites/horizon2020/files/h2020_threeyearson_a4_horizontal_2018_web.pdf

14. We request the Horizon Europe Programme to facilitate the access to grants to more organisations working **on research on human rights and democratic values** and to make the grants more easily available for researchers working in public universities, public research centres, and for education trade unions. We believe that there **should be more equal, socio-economically diverse distribution among partners** in the research proposals. In respect to the allocation of funding to researchers, we demand the **gender perspective** to be strengthened, a point which is crucial if we are to encourage more women to choose careers in scientific research.
15. We have also concerns related to the **Open Science Label**⁶ suggested by the Communication to researchers not only for the recognition and reward of their international mobility but also for their actions on **science-business linkage**. In addition, we notice that more and more programmes and initiatives are assigned by the European Commission to foster **education, research and business cooperation for entrepreneurship development**, such as the entrepreneurial transformation of European universities and public research centres, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the Higher Education Innovate Initiative, and Open innovation / European Innovation Council.⁷ We therefore demand that the future Horizon Europe Programme support **academic freedom of universities, free science and freedom of research and social dimension** such as inclusiveness, democratic values, and European integration. The societal elements are vital and, in establishing the budget, should be treated as contributing to solutions and not as a problem. We also demand that researchers retain **copyright** to their work while at the same time promoting open access. Article 2 states that one of the programme's objectives is "fostering open science and ensuring visibility to the public and open access to results". We are concerned that **open access to data and research** will mean that public research outcomes will be open for everyone including businesses despite public research having been conducted by public sources. The fact that businesses will have access to such data violates copyright and intellectual property rights and indirectly academic freedom.
16. We welcome that the rules of **ethics** concerning the conduct of research under the future Horizon Europe programme are expected to respect the *Charter of*

⁶ „The take up of open science practices at different stages of the researchers' careers can also stimulate attractive career environments for all, give more recognition and reward international and science-business mobility. The modernisation of universities and public research organisations should therefore also be supported with an Open Science label. Such a high-quality label could be awarded to individual universities and trans-national university partnerships, and would be recognised in future EU support for trans-national projects involving universities.” Page 16 of the Communication:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/com-2018-306-a-renewed-european-agenda-for-research-and-innovation-may-2018-en-0.pdf>

⁷ Page 16 of the Communication: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/com-2018-306-a-renewed-european-agenda-for-research-and-innovation-may-2018-en-0.pdf>

Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols.

17. We welcome that this proposal aims to take specific measures aimed at the Union's **outermost regions**, to ensure that all countries benefit equally from this programme and that there are no geographical divergences within the Union.
18. ETUCE appreciates that Article 7 of the Proposal stipulates that missions will be **open to multiple bottom-up solutions** and is equally pleased that research agendas are to be **established in close liaison with the scientific community**.
19. Finally, we remind the European Commission that quality research and the budget allocated to research should be discussed in the framework of **effective social dialogue**. As the future Horizon Europe fund would support researchers and research from the public EU budget, we regret that ETUCE has not been involved in the governance of this fund. We ask the European Commission to demand the member states to **involve the trade unions of higher education and research staff** in the decision-making on the governance and allocation of national Horizon Europe funds.