Horizon 2020: Reflection on first calls; implications for future calls
4th ICA Rectors and Deans Forum, Ghent, 23 October 2014

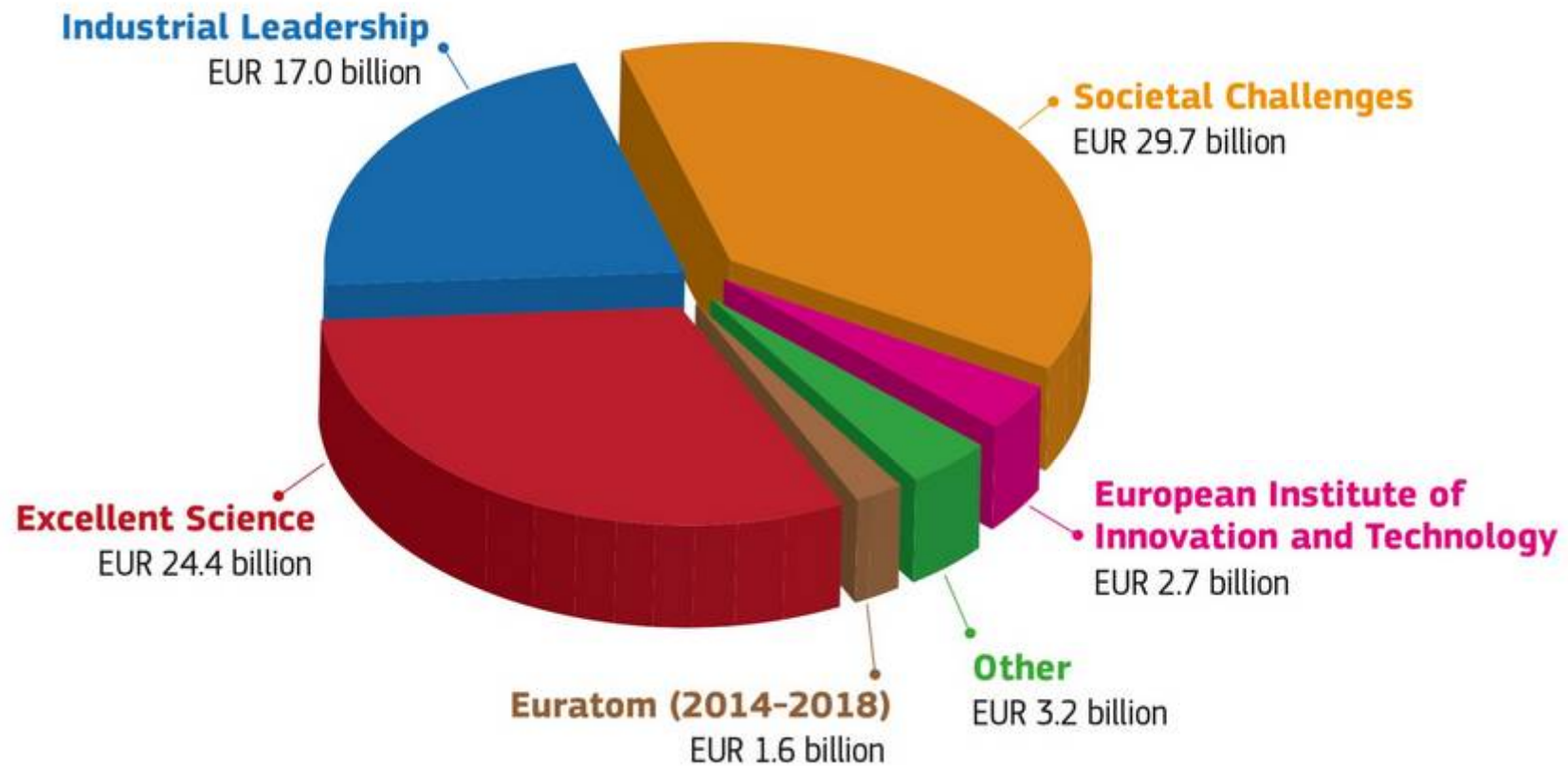# Three priorities

European Commission

€ 79 billion from 2014 to 2020

HORIZON 2020 BUDGET (in current prices)

Industrial Leadership
EUR 17.0 billion

Societal Challenges
EUR 29.7 billion

Excellent Science
EUR 24.4 billion

European Institute of Innovation and Technology
EUR 2.7 billion

Euratom (2014–2018)
EUR 1.6 billion

Other
EUR 3.2 billion

European Commission

What is new?

- **A single programme** bringing together three separate programmes/initiatives*

- **Coupling research to innovation** – from research to retail, all forms of innovation

- **Focus on societal challenges** facing EU society, e.g. health, clean energy and transport

- **Simplified access,** for all companies, universities, institutes in all EU countries and beyond

European Commission

New approach to work programmes and calls

- **More strategic**

- **Two year work programmes**
  (2014-2015: > € 15 billion)

- **Less prescriptive calls**
  (64 calls in 2014)

- ✓ **Broader and fewer topics**

- ✓ **First call deadlines as from March 2014**

European Commission

Major Simplification
for the benefit of applicants

1. **A single set of rules for all funding under Horizon 2020**

   ✓ **Fewer, more flexible, funding instruments**

2. **Simpler reimbursement: 1 project = 1 funding rate**

   ✓ **100% of the total eligible costs** (70% for innovation actions)

   ✓ **Non-profit legal entities can also receive 100% in innovation actions**

   ✓ **Single flat rate for indirect costs** (25% of eligible costs)

3. **Faster time to grant**

   ✓ **Within 8 months of call deadline**

European Commission

Major Simplification for the benefit of applicants

4. **Fewer, better targeted controls and audits**

5. **Coherent implementation**

   ✓ **Through dedicated agencies**

   ✓ **Single IT system**

6. **Simplification in grant agreements**

European Commission

Evaluation criteria

STANDARD AWARD CRITERIA

EXCELLENCE	IMPACT	QUALITY & EFFICIENCY OF THE ACTION

✓ **ERC** frontier Research actions » only EXCELLENCE

✓ **Innovation actions** » higher weighting for "IMPACT"

**Proposal evaluated by the experts "as it is"
and not as "what could be" = no need for negotiation**

European Commission

Simpler access through the Participant Portal

- **Single entry point**
  from calls to electronic submission of proposals

- **New tools for smart searches for the benefit of users,**
  including newcomers to the programme.

European Commission

Response to H2020 calls in first six months

- More than **2.1 million visits on Participant Portal** in December 2013 and increasing in the following months, **just over 3 million visits;**

- More than **16,000 proposals** submitted (till end of September: 30,000);

- Nearly **5,300 expert evaluators** contracted (60,000 experts registered);

- Attracted **newcomers** and evidence of **increase in industry participation;**

- Positive **response to new innovation actions** and **SME instrument;**

- High oversubscription reflect the **popularity of Horizon 2020.**

Lessons Learned from first H2020 Calls

Analysis of the experiences with the first calls with the objectives:

- Take-stock;
- Prepare (necessary) corrective measures;
- Feed into WP cycle for 2016-17.

Based on

- **Statistical analysis of 33 concluded calls** (approx. half of calls launched in 2014, but comprising only ca. 5,250 proposals) covering the first six months of operation;
- Feedback from **Commission services and Executive Agencies;**
- **Observers' reports** from evaluations;
- Feedback from **some stakeholders, some Member States and certain NCPs.**

Research
and
Innovation

Lessons Learned from first H2020 Calls
First feed-back and recommendations (1)

1. **Work programme and information for applicants**

Participant Portal valued by R&I community, but **work programme needs to be more visible** (general introduction, introduction to calls, supporting documents etc.).

Enhance presentation of calls in Participant Portal;
Continuous improvement of Horizon 2020's IT system.

Delays in **handling questions and providing information** to NCPs, applicants etc.

Reinforce Commission efforts to help NCPs do their job;
Update regularly Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Research and Innovation

Lessons Learned from first H2020 Calls
First feed-back and recommendations (2)

2. Response to calls

Lower success rates (14%) than FP7, owing to the **significant over-subscription** (8x the available budget, 5x under FP7). *However, picture remains largely diverse at this stage*.

> ➡ *Further analysis necessary;*
> *Maintain the challenge-   based approach, but improve clarity*
> of *topic descriptions and, in particular, of impact statements.*

Managing oversubscription, notably in two stage evaluations.

> ➡ *Adapt call conditions for two-stage evaluations ensuring a 1:3 (budget-wise) success rate in the second phase.*

Research and Innovation

Lessons Learned from first H2020 Calls
First feed-back and recommendations (3)

3. Proposal submission and evaluations

Selection of expert evaluators (e.g. lack of innovation expertise; expert rotation and gender balance; quality of experts).

> ➡️ *Reinforce efforts to attract experts;*
> *Develop a methodology to measure the quality of expertise provided in evaluations.*

Evaluations: *According to first observers' reports **overall excellent quality of evaluations with good mix of experts**. Some concerns regarding **interpretation of criteria and new concepts** (e.g. innovation management).*

> ➡️ *Update the evaluation standard briefings and guideline documents, including info for applicants; and the evaluation process in response to feedback received.*

Research and Innovation

Lessons Learned from first H2020 Calls
First feed-back and recommendations (4)

4. Feedback to applicants and implementation

Difference in level of feed-back provided in ESR (notably in first stage of two-stage calls).

Develop a set of minimum standards on ESR feedback;
Further alignment of practices, starting with the 2016-2017 work programme.

Implementation (effects of no grant negotiation, TTG on evaluation process).

Carry out further monitoring of implementation processes, particularly when they affect applicants.

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Lessons Learned from first H2020 Calls
Embedded key features and novelties - Snapshots

1. **Covering the full research and innovation cycle:** Increased industry participation; mentioning TRL useful; good uptake of IA, other new instruments to be monitored;

2. **SMEs/SME instrument:** Around 18% funding for SMEs; full impact of SME instrument still to kick in, which was successfully launched;

3. **Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH):** SSH expertise well represented in evaluations; coverage in proposals can be enhanced;

4. **Gender:** Still room to improve gender balance in evaluation panels; gender issues more frequent in flagged topics;

5. **International cooperation:** Significant drop in participation of international partners; continued good level in ERC and MSCA.

➡️ *Address upstream in WP preparation cycle to ensure embedding in priority setting as well as implementation*

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Lessons Learned from first H2020 Calls
Main conclusions and recommendations - Summary

- ✓ **Continue** the **challenge-based approach** in delivering topics while improving their clarity and tightening impact requirements;

- ✓ Address **key features** and **novelties upstream** in the work programme preparation cycle;

- ✓ **Increase international cooperation activities** (flagship initiatives, accompanying actions)

- ✓ Make **better use** of the **whole toolbox** of funding instruments;

- ✓ Conduct **further analysis of oversubscription** and devise measures to effectively manage large demand, esp.in two-stage calls;

- ✓ Step-up efforts to **attract experts** and **further improve evaluation process**, esp. impact and innovation

- ✓ **Continue monitoring the implementation of calls** and ensure adequate level of feedback to applicants.

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For further information

- **Participant Portal**

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/home.html

- **Helpdesk**

http://ec.europa.eu/research/enquiries

- **Expert evaluators needed!**

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/experts/index.html

- **Learn more about Horizon 2020**

http://ec.europa.eu/horizon2020

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Thank you for your attention!

European Commission