



Position paper – Public consultation on EU funds in the area of investment, research and innovation, SMEs and single market

The EU budget should prepare Europe for the future

Aarhus University is welcoming the recent proposal from Commissioner Oettinger to exclude the EU's Framework Programme on research and innovation and Erasmus+ from cuts, and for the College of Commissioners for unanimously backing the proposal and together with the Parliament's Budget Committee aiming for increasing the budget.

At a time when the EU budget is under pressure and EU added value is being scrutinized the Framework Programme for research and innovation has succeeded in mobilizing talented European researchers and entrepreneurs – and it has contributed greatly to the development of new knowledge, innovations and solutions to a number of societal and industrial challenges. Funding of research is a de facto investment in growth and boosting the European science base is paramount to ensure sustainable growth in Europe .

The post 2020 MFF provide a strong opportunity for rethinking and adapt the EU budget to better reflect the Union's priorities and common challenges. To honour the ambition of making Europe a leading knowledge economy, funding should at least mirror the massive investments in science and education made by countries and regions outside Europe.

Strong focus on excellence

In order for the Framework Programme to deliver on its overall, strategic objectives, excellence should continue to be the governing principle of the Framework Programme.

The Excellent Science Pillar has a strong and demonstrable impact on the support of outstanding curiosity-driven, fundamental research. The European Research Council (ERC), the Marie S. Curie Actions (MSCA), the Future and Emerging Technologies

¹ https://ri-links2ua.eu/object/document/326/attach/KI0117050ENN_002.pdf





(FET) and Research Infrastructure (RI) programmes have contributed significantly to strengthening the European science base.

Aarhus University strongly support an increased funding of the Excellent Science Pillar.

Global challenges

Real innovation and development of new solutions to the global challenges will always result from new ideas based on fundamental research and a number of influential industrial leaders have emphasized the need for substantial investments in fundamental research at universities as a precondition for innovation. By focussing too much on “market readiness” we risk the creation of “a valley of death”, where truly ground-breaking results are not integrated in the value chain leading to the creation of radical innovation. This is a problem that needs to be addressed by offering better opportunities for funding of excellent, enabling research in the Framework Programme.

Aarhus University is in favour of a more bottom-up oriented approach in the future to have a more adaptive form of research in the EU. Aarhus University welcomes the new mission-oriented approach to challenge-driven research in the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP9). Formulating missions that address the concerns of European citizens, contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and foster interdisciplinary and transnational research excellence holds great potential to build on the successes of the current and past framework programmes.

Interdisciplinarity and the integration of Social Science and Humanities

The great challenges in our society call for an interdisciplinary approach, and the Framework Programme has been instrumental in bringing relevant stakeholders together. However in many cases SSH has been an add-on service to well-defined projects, and the full potential of SSH has not been grasped. It is crucial to move beyond a conception of SSH as primarily concerned with downstream translation of scientific results into societal impact. Rather, SSH aspects should play a serious role in upstream shaping of research designs and research contents. In terms of priority setting, it is recommended that further efforts are made to include SSH aspects in the formulation of work programmes. However, Aarhus University would welcome approaches to priority setting that emphasise the importance of project portfolios rather than individual projects, both in terms of contents and expected impact. Such approaches might, in some circumstances, give priority to stand-alone SSH projects within a diverse portfolio of technical projects, and might then reduce forced marriages in which SSH aspects becomes ‘appendix studies’ to individual projects.

Responsibility and openness

In a context of increased political and societal contestation of research-based knowledge, it is important that the Framework Programme involves a sustained commitment to openness and responsibility. The ‘Science with and for Society’ programme



has been instrumental in facilitating genuine interaction between science and its societal constituencies. Aarhus University supports principles of openness and Responsible Research and Innovation as cross-cutting priorities of the Framework Programme.

High quality evaluations

A transparent, efficient and robust evaluation system is imperative for a well-functioning research framework programme. Further, excellence should remain the main criteria for evaluating all proposals. The principle of excellence should not be diluted by geographic concerns.

Simplification

Simplification has been high on the agenda, and Aarhus University acknowledges the efforts European Commission has made. Simplification should now focus on reducing the number of instruments. Aarhus University acknowledges that the European Commission has taken steps to explore synergies between the Framework Programme to other EU programmes. Yet it is recommended that this work is further explored.