

Assessment of Horizon 2020 implementation in view of its interim evaluation and the Framework Programme 9 proposal

2016/2147(INI) - 06/06/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the own-initiative report by Soledad CABEZÓN RUIZ (S&D, ES) on the assessment of Horizon 2020 implementation in view of its interim evaluation and the Framework Programme 9 proposal.

Members considered that, more than three years after the launch of Horizon 2020, it is time for Parliament to develop its position on its interim evaluation and a vision of the future FP9.

The main conclusions of the assessments are as follows:

Implementation of Horizon 2020: Members stressed that the evaluation of FP7 and monitoring of Horizon 2020 show that the EU FP for research and innovation is a success and brings **clear added value** to the EU. However, the report noted that there are still possibilities to improve the FP and future programmes. They considered that the reasons for its success are the multidisciplinary and collaborative setting and the excellence and impact requirements.

Noting that the FP intends to incentivise industry participation in order to increase R&D spending by industry, Members called on the Commission to assess the European added value and relevance to the public of funding for industry-driven instruments such as Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs), as well as the coherence, openness and transparency of all joint initiatives.

Given that the programme budget, management and implementation is spread over 20 different EU bodies, Members queried whether this results in excessive coordination efforts, administrative complexity and duplication. The Commission should work towards **streamlining** and simplifying this.

Budget: Members noted that the current alarmingly low success rate of less than 14 % represents a negative trend compared to FP7. Oversubscription makes it impossible to make funding available for a large number of very high-quality projects and that the cuts inflicted by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) have deepened this problem. The Commission is called on to **avoid making further cuts** to the Horizon 2020 budget.

Evaluation: the report called for better and more transparent evaluation and quality assurance by the evaluators and the need to **improve the feedback** given to participants throughout the evaluation process.

The Commission is called on to publish, in conjunction with the call for proposals, **detailed evaluation criteria**, to provide participants with more detailed and informative Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs).

The **participant portal** should be more readily available and the network of National Contact Points extended and be provided with more resources.

Cross-cutting issues: Members noted that synergies between funds are crucial to make investments more effective. They stressed that RIS3 are an important tool to catalyse synergies setting out national and

regional frameworks for R&D&I investments and, as such, should be promoted and reinforced. They regretted the presence of substantial barriers to making synergies fully operational and sought an alignment of rules and procedures for R&D&I projects under ESIF and FP.

They called on the Commission to earmark part of ESIF for Research and Innovation Strategies (RIS3) synergies with Horizon 2020 and to revise the State Aid rules and to allow R&D structural fund projects to be justifiable within the FP rules of procedure.

Members also welcomed efforts to secure better links between the ERA and the European Higher Education Area, with a view to facilitating ways of training the next generation of researchers.

The importance of closer cooperation between industry and the university and scientific establishment has been stressed.

The Commission is called upon to:

- review the terms of international cooperation in FP and to establish concrete, immediate measures and a long-term strategic vision and structure to support this objective; welcomes, in this regard, initiatives such as BONUS and PRIMA;
- design mechanisms to better include SMEs in larger interdisciplinary FP9 projects in order to harness their full potential;
- keep KICs in the current EIT structure, stressing the importance of transparency and extensive stakeholder involvement, and to analyse how the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and KICs may interact with the European Innovation Council (EIC);
- encourage venture capital investments in Europe;

FP 9 recommendations: the report called for the following:

- an increased overall budget of EUR 120 billion for FP9;
- providing in Pillar 3 a balanced and flexible set of instruments responding to the dynamic nature of emerging problems;
- enhanced synergies between FP9 and other dedicated European funds for research and innovation;
- separate defence research from civil research in the next MFF, providing two different programmes with two separate budgets that do not affect the budgetary ambitions of civilian research of FP9;
- prioritise funding for climate change research and climate data collection infrastructure;
- need for new **higher excellence centres** and regions and the importance of continuing to develop the ERA;
- provide increased levels of support in FP9 for young researchers;
- the next FP will have to take into consideration the UK's departure from the EU and its implications.