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

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The European Parliament adopted by 523 votes to 65, with 81 abstentions, a resolution 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: Parliament 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**. 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: the resolution 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.

Horizon 2020 must be primarily **grant-based** and geared towards funding **fundamental and collaborative research**. Research may be a high risk investment for investors and that funding research through grants is a necessity. Financial instruments should be available for high Technology Readiness Levels (TRL), close to market activities as part of InnovFin financial instruments.

Evaluation: confirming that ‘excellence’ should remain the essential evaluation criterion across all three pillars of the FP, Parliament 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: Parliament recommended, *inter alia*:

- enhancing the **societal challenges** approach;
- continuing efforts to **simplify** administration, in particular through the Commission's proposal to introduce lump sum payments;
- encouraging synergies between funds to make investments more effective, for example by strengthening research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3), which are an important tool to catalyse synergies setting out national and regional frameworks for investment in research, development and innovation;
- revising the **state aid** rules and to allow R&D structural fund projects to be justifiable within the FP rules of procedure;
- coming forward with clear rules enabling the full implementation of the **Seal of Excellence** scheme and to explore funding synergies;
- reviewing the terms of **international cooperation** in the framework programme which fell from 5 % in FP7 to 2.8 % in Horizon 2020;
- providing adequate funding for activities related to social sciences and humanities;
- designing new policies to maximise **research results** and the amount of scientific data available;
- designing mechanisms to **better include SMEs** in larger interdisciplinary FP9 projects in order to harness their full potential;
- keeping **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);
- encouraging **venture capital** investments in Europe.

Members also welcomed efforts to secure better links between the **European Research Area (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.

FP 9 recommendations: Parliament 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;
- address the potential problem of too many **applications** and low success rates in the Horizon 2020 programme;
- 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.