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**COUNCIL DECISION ESTABLISHING THE SPECIFIC PROGRAMME
IMPLEMENTING HORIZON 2020 - THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME
FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (2014-2020)**

WORK PROGRAMME 2014 – 2015

16. Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation

INFORMAL DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Important notice:

The present document is meant to facilitate the discussions towards the preparation of the work programme 2014 – 2015. It does not at this stage cover all relevant aspects and it does not prejudge the outcome of the on-going inter-institutional negotiations on Horizon 2020 or internal work on cross-cutting aspects. Hence, it remains subject to change. Information, such as indicative budgets per call/area, will be provided at later stage.

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Introduction to Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation

Despite serious efforts deployed at national and European level, the Union sees significant internal disparities in terms of research and innovation performance. These trends are further exacerbated by the continuing severe financial crisis, and the subsequent adverse effects on public research and innovation budgets.

There is significant evidence pointing to the fact that the pathway to economic growth and competitiveness is largely connected to the scaling up of investment in research and innovation. To maximise such investment there is the need to tap into Europe's yet unexploited potential on research and innovation through a stronger commitment by the low-performing Member States and regions. This focus will enable the European Research Area to function in a more streamlined and homogeneous way, where the individual strengths of every Member State may be optimised.

Horizon 2020 introduces specific measures for spreading excellence and widening participation through engaging those who commit less in the EU research and innovation effort. This will greatly enhance competitiveness.

The separate actions of *Teaming* and *Twinning* will create new Centres of Excellence and expertise and encourage pan-European networking among researchers with a strong focus on excellence and innovation. They will build on knowledge transfer and, exchange of best practice between research institutions, building on the strengths of leading partners.

ERA Chairs will bring outstanding researchers to universities and other research institutions that have high potential for research excellence. On their side, institutions should mobilise support from different funding sources, including from the European Structural and Investment Funds, to invest in facilities and infrastructures in the context of Smart Specialisation Strategic Policy Frameworks and commit to institutional change and a broader support to innovation.

A *Policy Support Facility* will inform better the formulation and optimisation of research and innovation policies in low performing Member States and regions aiming to make them more competitive at European level by offering expert advice to public authorities. Efforts to improve the international experience and networking capacities of peripheral institutions will be made by stimulating their participation with cross-border science networks through dedicated *COST* activities, connecting unexploited pockets of excellence throughout Europe.

Finally, actions to facilitate the trans-national co-operation between *NCPs* will be deployed, helping less experienced entities in low performing Member States or regions, bridge the knowledge gap and rapidly acquire know-how accumulated in other countries thus enabling better access to funding opportunities in the EU Framework Programmes and beyond.

Call for Teaming

H2020-TEAM-2014

Specific challenge: Despite its strengths, the European Research and Innovation landscape presents a lot of structural disparities, with research and innovation excellence concentrated in a few geographical zones. These disparities are due to, among other reasons, the insufficient critical mass of science and competence centres that could strategically engage countries and regions in a path of innovative growth, building on freshly developed capabilities. This could help countries and regions that are lagging behind in terms of research and innovation performance reclaim their competitive position in the global value chains. Teaming will address this challenge by creating such centres of excellence, building on partnerships between leading scientific institutions and low performing partners that display the willingness to engage together on this purpose.

Scope: Teaming, will involve in principle, two (2) parties: a research intensive university or research organisation (public or private) or a consortium of research intensive institutions and the participant organisation from a low performing Member State (typically a research agency at national or regional level, or a regional authority). Teaming actions will be selected for funding through the following process:

Stage 1: Partner organisations will have to explain clearly their vision for the establishment of a new Centre of Excellence (or the upgrading of an existing one) that would be hosted in the low performing Member State or region involved. This will include a long-term science and innovation strategy of the future Centre. Furthermore, proposers should include a clear analysis of how this strategy would fit with the relevant Smart Specialisation Strategic Policy Framework of the participating low performing Member State or region. In the case of an upgrade of an existing centre of excellence, additional information concerning organisation profile, activities and strategy of the centre should be provided. Successful applicants will receive a grant to produce an extensive, detailed and robust Business Plan for the setting-up / upgrading of a Centre of Excellence.

The Business Plan should demonstrate the potential of the future Centre to develop new (or connect effectively with existing) regional cluster formation. It has to include commitments from the interested national or regional authorities to commit financial resources (e.g. resources coming from the European Structural and Investment Funds) as appropriate, for implementing the future Centre, in particular regarding investment in infrastructure and equipment. The duration of a typical first stage of a Teaming project will be 18 months.

Stage 2: All funded projects of the first stage will automatically enter into the second stage of the competition that will involve an in-depth evaluation (by an international high-level expert panel) of all submitted Business Plans. These will be evaluated in terms of content (scientific excellence), impact on innovation and quality of the proposed implementation plan.

Following this evaluation and depending on available budget, the Commission will enter into a Grant agreement with the highest ranked proposals to provide further substantial support for the start-up and implementation phase of the future Centre. It is to be noted however, that Horizon 2020 will not support infrastructure or large equipment costs associated with the new or upgraded centre (as reflected above, such costs are expected to be supported by other types

of funding, including where relevant by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)).¹

Expected impact:

Actions will lead to the creation of new (or significant upgrades of existing) Centres of Excellence in Member States and regions currently identified as low performers in terms of research and innovation, increasing on the one hand their scientific capabilities and on the other, enabling them to engage in a strategic growth path in terms of economic development. It is also expected that improved scientific capabilities will allow them to improve their chances to seek competitive funding in international fora (including the EU Framework Programmes). Over the medium to long term there will be a measurable and significant improvement in the research and innovation culture (as shown through indicators such as research intensity, innovation performance, enhanced strategy, values and attitudes towards research and innovation) within Member States and Associated Countries currently with low R&I performance. These will be fostered through constructive and sustainable partnerships achieved between research and innovation-intensive institutions and the partnering organisation in the low performing Member State or region. Benefits will also accrue to the institutions from the more intensive research and innovation performers, in terms of issues such as access to new research avenues, creativity and the development of new approaches, as well as a source for increased mobility (inwards and outwards) of qualified scientists.

Type of action: Coordination and Support Actions

Call for Twinning

H2020-TWINN-2015

Specific challenge: The specific challenge is to address networking gaps and deficiencies between the research institutions of the low performing Member States and regions and their more research intensive counterparts at EU level. Driven by the quest for excellence, research intensive institutions tend to collaborate increasingly in closed groups, producing a crowding-out effect for a large number of promising institutions. This is the challenge that a specific Twinning action will try to address.

Scope: Twinning aims at significantly strengthening a defined field of research in a particular knowledge institution (a research active university or a public research organisation) by

¹ Following an initial (minimum) three years' operating period, the Commission may consider to award "labels of excellence" to those newly established Centres that have met strict international standards through an independent international evaluation process (to be further organised by the Commission). There would however, be no additional EU funding involved. It should also be noted that this operation is not part of this Work Programme and Call.

creating a link between this institution and at least two internationally-leading research intensive counterparts in other Member States and Associated Countries. Twinning will:

- Enhance the S&T capacity of the linked institutions;
- Help raise staff's research profile as well as the one of the institutions involved.

Successful Twinning proposals will have to clearly outline the scientific strategy for stepping up and stimulating scientific excellence and innovation capacity in a defined area of research as well as the scientific quality of the partners involved in the twinning exercise. They are also encouraged to explain how the Twinning activity will contribute to the overall Strategic Policy Framework for Smart Specialisation of the specific location of the initiating institution.

Such a strategy should include a comprehensive set of measures to be supported. These could be: short term staff exchanges; expert visits and short-term on-site or virtual training; workshops; conference attendance; organisation of joint summer school type activities; dissemination and outreach activities. Twinning activities will provide no support to infrastructure and equipment and no support for hiring new permanent research staff.

Expected impact: There will be a measurable and significant improvement in the overall scientific and innovation capacity of the initiating institution in a particular field of research through linking with research intensive counterpart institutions in other Member States and Associated Countries and thereby expect positive impacts on the overall research and innovation potential of the Member State or the region the initiating institution is located in. Such improvement could be measured through peer-reviewed publications increase, increased impact factors in terms of citations etc.

Impact indicators should reflect increase in relative terms based on the situation before the project compared to the projected situation immediately after the project is completed, as well as within the foreseeable future after completion. These indicators are important for determining the potential regional and national impact, as well as long-term sustainability and viability of the beneficiary organisations.

Type of action: Coordination and Support Actions

Call for ERA Chairs

H2020-ERA.CH-2014

Specific challenge: Research and innovation leaders can have a decisive and positive impact on the culture and performance of research institutions. Yet issues such as the availability of research funding, institutional rigidities and access to resources can hamper the mobility of such leaders to promising institutions, particularly in low research performing Member States and regions. ERA Chairs actions will address the specific challenge to create the appropriate conditions and opportunities for such science leaders to move and engage with willing institutions to dramatically improve the excellence of their research and thereby modify their research and innovation landscape.

Scope: The ERA Chairs actions will support universities or other eligible research institutions to host an "ERA Chair" holder. This host institution will employ the ERA Chair holder through an employment contract or equivalent for a maximum period of five years. The Chair

should have a full-time position within the organisation/university, professor or similar, that will allow her/him to freely apply for research funding in order to raise the level of research excellence of the team and the institution.

The appointment of an ERA Chair holder will be undertaken by the host institution at the beginning of the action. The appointment must follow an open and merit-based recruitment process, and will be subject to monitoring by the European Commission. The criteria used by the institution to appoint the ERA Chairs holder should include their scientific excellence and their competence and experience to lead and manage research teams and secure competitive research funding. The Chairs must be open to all EU and non-EU nationals.

The ERA Chairs may be in any area of science and technology, including socio-economic sciences and humanities, but are expected to be in line with relevant regional and national strategies for smart specialisation.

Expected impact:

- Increased attractiveness of the institution, region and country for internationally excellent and mobile researchers.
- Increased research excellence of the institution in the specific fields covered by the ERA Chair holders.
- Improved capability to compete successfully for internationally competitive research funding.
- Institutional changes within the ERA host institution to implement the European Research Area principles, (including an open recruitment policy, gender balance, peer review, and doctoral training²);
- Contributing to the objectives of regional or national smart specialisation strategies, including increased interactions with economic and social actions, and complementing support provided under the European Structural and Investment Funds.

Type of action: Coordination and Support Actions

Call for NCP Transnational Cooperation (Widening)

H2020-NCP -2014

Specific challenge: Facilitate trans-national co-operation between NCPs within the ‘Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation’ part with a view to identifying and sharing good practices and raising the general standard of support to programme applicants, taking into account the diversity of actors that make up the constituency of this the ‘Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation’ part.

² http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/era-communication_en.pdf

Scope: Support will be given to a network of formally nominated NCPs in the area of the ‘Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation’ part. The activities will be tailored according to the nature of the area, and the priorities of the NCPs concerned. Various mechanisms may be included, such as benchmarking, joint workshops, enhanced cross-border brokerage events, specific training linked to this ‘Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation’ part as well as to gender dimension of Research and Innovation. Special attention will be given to enhance the competence of NCPs, including helping less experienced NCPs rapidly acquire the know-how accumulated in other countries.

The focus throughout should be on issues specific to the ‘Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation’ part.

Proposals can only include NCPs from EU Member States, and Associated Countries, who have been officially appointed by the relevant national authorities.

The consortium should have a good representation of experienced and less experienced NCPs.

If certain NCPs wish to abstain from participating, this fact should be explicitly documented in the proposal. These NCPs are nevertheless invited and encouraged to participate in the project activities, and are eligible for reimbursement of their participation.

Participation of NCPs from third countries is welcome, but these NCPs are not eligible for reimbursement for their participation.

The Commission expects to receive and fund a single proposal under this heading.

Expected impact:

- An improved and professionalised NCP service across Europe, thereby helping simplify access to Horizon 2020 calls, lowering the entry barriers for newcomers, and raising the average quality of proposals submitted.
- A more consistent level of NCP support services across Europe.
- Increased application levels as well as improved quality of proposals particularly from newcomers

Type of Action: Coordination and Support Action