

Lesson 2 - The European research funding framework: funding programmes and calls

Keywords

- European funding programmes
- Calls vs. Tenders
- RIAs, IAs and CSAs
- EU Missions
- Guiding docs for Calls
- RMAs' involvement in calls and proposals

Learning Objectives

③ ⑦ ⑪ ⑰
⑱ ⑲ ⑳



Scan for complete LOs

Go to the exercise

<https://learningapps.org/watch?v=pfc6ukbvj22>

Go to video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dACliBjU3T8&t=147s1s>

Introduction to European funding

The European Union's vision relies on creating a sustainable and prosperous future for people and the planet based on European values. In the previous lesson, we have seen how promoting and supporting research and innovation can help attain this vision by boosting Europe's competitiveness and growth. While this is important, **tackling climate change is also a major concern**, which requires competitive R&I capacity. For this reason, helping to achieve the **UN Sustainable Development Goals** has become major priority, which must be addressed in all European R&I funding frameworks.

Other priorities that encompass many European funding programmes are related to addressing **global challenges**, attaining **territorial cohesion** and **reducing regional disparities**, or **strengthening the European Research Area**. Together, these priorities help **define a research funding framework** that is then translated into preconditions ruling the major European funding programmes.

Several **large-scale European funding programmes address different policy goals and areas**.

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- Watch this short video to understand how policies help define a research funding framework that is then translated into European funding programmes:
[EU Funding for your project?](#)



Figure 11 - EU funding for your project
(source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P62sjnHL59w>)

Some take-aways from the video:

- European funding comes through **taxpayers' money** from all European countries.
- There are **five main European funds** discussed and agreed at the European Parliament and managed by national authorities: the **Cohesion Fund**, the **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development**, the **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund**, the **Regional Development Fund** and the **European Social Fund**.
- These funds support many important European policy areas, such as the **area of Research and Innovation**, which is employed to attain growth, job creation and sustainability of the planet.
- **Other Funds are managed directly by the European Commission**, such as Horizon Europe, the Erasmus Plus and others, that also support the area of Research and Innovation. These are attributed to beneficiaries competitively, using a **Call for Proposals**.

The main features of the European funds managed directly by the EU are detailed on the front page of the [Funding and Tenders Portal of the European Commission](#). Examples include the **ERASMUS Plus Programme (EPLUS)**, **Programme for the Environment and Climate Action (LIFE)**, **Creative Europe (CREA)** and the EU programme by excellence dedicated to funding

research activities, the **Horizon 2020** Framework Programme (H2020) which ran from 2014 to 2020.

Horizon 2020 (2014-2020) and its successor, Horizon Europe (2021-2027)

The European Commission's proposal for Horizon Europe is an ambitious Research and Innovation programme following Horizon 2020's footsteps.



Figure 12 - Horizon Europe (2021-2027)

(source: Video available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8BQNnX6_kY)

- Watch this short video to find out more abouts Horizon Europe (2021-2027) and its predecessor Horizon 2020 (2014-2020): [Horizon Europe - the next R&I programme](#)

Highlights from the video:

The **Horizon Europe** programme will be based on **three complementary and interconnected pillars**. The first pillar (**Excellent science**) will support excellent basic science. It will strengthen the Union's scientific leadership and develop **high-quality knowledge and skills**.

The second pillar (**Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness**) will support research which addresses **societal challenges and industrial technologies** in areas such as health, security, digital and key enabling technologies, climate, energy, mobility, food and

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natural resources. Alongside these areas, a limited number of **research missions and partnerships** will be introduced. Any given mission will contain a portfolio of research activities.

The third pillar (**Innovative Europe**) will focus on scaling up **breakthrough and disruptive innovation** by establishing the **European Innovation Council**. The latter will offer a one-stop-shop for high-potential innovators.

In addition to these three pillars, there are provisions to improve the programme's delivery for **widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area**. These include measures to support member states in making the most of their national research and innovation potential. The regulation specifies the member states which will benefit from the actions aimed at widening participation.

The Horizon Europe structure of funding programmes is illustrated below along with that of its predecessor, Horizon 2020.

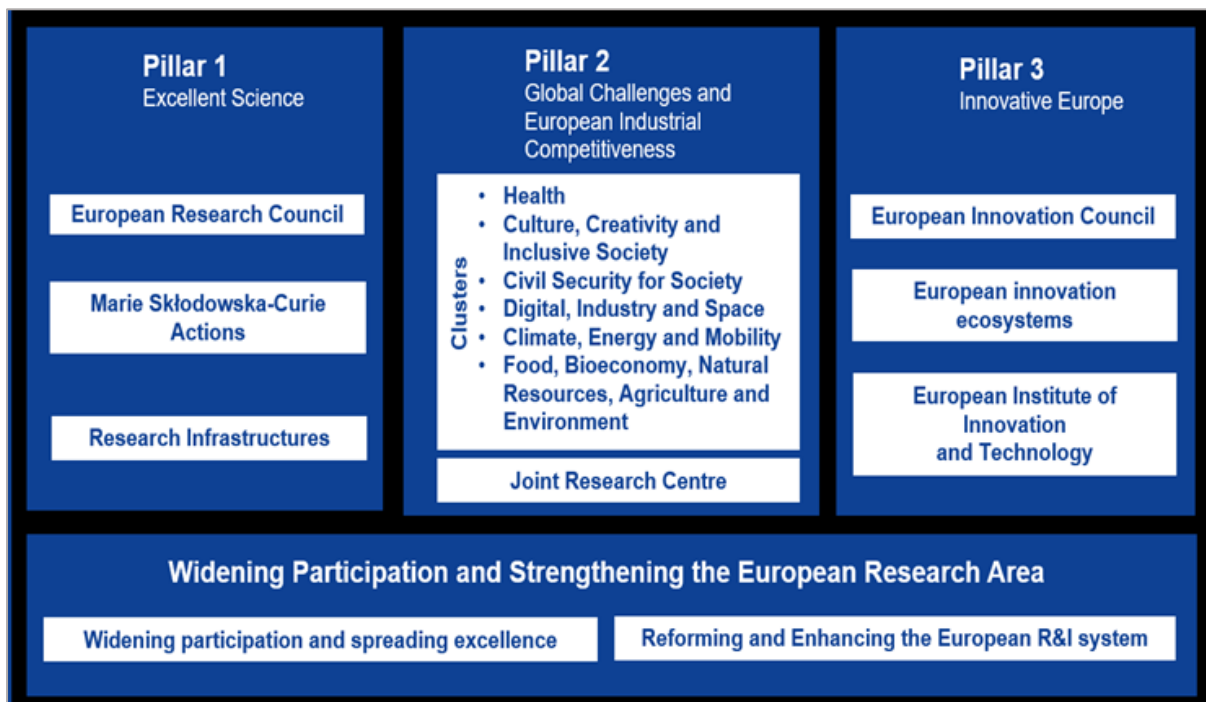


Figure 13 - Horizon Europe's main structure (source:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/documents/ec_rtd_he-orientations-towards-strategic-plan_102019.pdf)



Figure 14 - Horizon 2020's main structure
Horizon 2020's main structure

(source: <https://secmotic.com/h2020-more-than-a-funding-program/#qref>)

Insights into specific funding programmes

Marie Skłodowska-Curie

support actions from researchers at all stages of their careers, regardless of age and nationality. Researchers working across all disciplines are eligible for funding. The MSCA also supports cooperation between industry and academia and innovative training to enhance employability and career development.”

- More at https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/node_en

European Research Council

*encourages the highest quality research in Europe through competitive funding and to support **investigator-driven frontier research across all fields**, on the basis of scientific excellence [...] Being 'investigator-driven', or 'bottom-up', in nature, the ERC approach allows researchers to identify new opportunities and directions in any field of research, rather than being led by priorities set by politicians [...] ERC grants are awarded through open competition to projects headed by starting and established researchers, irrespective of their origins, who are working or moving to work in Europe. The sole criterion for selection is **scientific excellence**. The aim here is to recognise the best ideas and confer status and visibility on the best brains in Europe, while also attracting talent from abroad.*

- More at <https://erc.europa.eu/>

Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation programme (Horizon 2020)

*addresses **widening actions** to tackle the low participation rates of certain countries in European projects by fully exploiting the potential of Europe's talent pool. It ensures that the benefits of an innovation-led economy are both **maximised and widely distributed across the European Union**. Synergies with European Structural and Investment funds are an important component [...] The interim evaluation of FP7 (November 2010) identified that some Member States, mainly those that joined the EU after 2004, had low participation rates in FP7 projects. Widening consists of three main actions: **Teaming, Twinning** and **ERA Chairs**, for which **specific eligibility conditions** apply. This ensures a targeted approach towards Widening Member States and Associated Countries. The Member States currently eligible for Widening support are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.*

- More at <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/spreading-excellence-and-widening-participation>

Key words in European funding

1. Can you distinguish a **Call** from a **Tender**?

A **tender** usually refers to the process whereby governments and financial institutions **invite bids for large projects that must be submitted within a finite deadline**. Thus, in a tender, the

project is predefined, and the organizations that have the greatest capacity to carry out the project for the best price will win.

A **funding proposal** is a request for money to complete **a project that is proposed in response to a specific Call for proposals** open by a funding agency or donor organization. Such projects are usually humanitarian or community oriented. The call for proposals defines the area and the conditions necessary to apply but does not predefine the details of the project. A well-formulated proposal will tell a potential funder every necessary detail and strength of the proposed project.

2. Do you know what type of activities will be funded in an Innovation Action, a Research and Innovation Action and a Coordination and Supporting Action?

Research & innovation actions (RIA) - Type of action under the H2020 Programme that funds **activities aiming to establish new knowledge and/or explore the feasibility of new or improved technologies, products, processes, services or solutions**. This includes basic and applied research, technology development and integration, testing and validation on a small-scale prototypes in a laboratory or simulated environment, and closely connected but limited demonstrations or pilot activities aiming to prove technical feasibility in a near-to-operational environment.

Innovation Action (IA) - Type of action under the H2020 Programme that funds **activities aimed at producing plans, arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services**, including prototyping, testing, demonstrating, piloting, large-scale product validation, market replication.

Coordination and support actions (CSA) - Type of action under the H2020 Programme that funds projects consisting mainly of **accompanying measures or complementary activities**, such as standardisation, dissemination, awareness-raising and communication, networking, coordination or support services, policy dialogue, mutual learning exercises, studies, networking and coordination between programmes in different countries.

3. What is a single-stage deadline model versus a two-stage deadline model?

Calls for applications can have **one submission stage**, that is, applicants apply one with a full proposal, or be divided into **two submission stages**. On the first deadline, the applicants often submit a reduced version of the project and, if they are selected for the second round, they present the full proposal before the second deadline for submission.

4. When is a project **mono-beneficiary** versus **multi-beneficiary**?

Mono-beneficiary actions - Actions that fund projects with **one beneficiary only**. Potential beneficiaries include many types of organizations, such as **Research Performing Organisations**.

Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) - Research is performed at institutions that hire researchers and other staff while providing conditions for the research to be carried out, such as the necessary scientific infrastructure, facilities, platforms, equipment and services to support research. Research performing organizations can be of many types. In addition to universities, research institutes and R&D companies, research is performed at other types of institutions (namely NGOs, hospitals, patient associations, regional authorities, public administration entities, museums, etc.).

Multi-beneficiary actions - Actions that fund projects backed by a **group of beneficiaries** (normally from different EU and associated countries). In this context, the group of beneficiaries (including organizations and individuals) is known as a **Consortium**.

5. What categories of countries exist within the European framework programmes?

Member states (MS) - EU member countries have signed the treaties of the European Union and are therefore subject to the privileges and obligations of EU membership.

Associated Country (AC) – A non-EU country that has entered into a specific agreement (*association agreement*) with the EU, to participate in a specific EU fund/funding programme. A country that does not have an association agreement cannot normally participate, even if it has some type of formal relationship with the EU (EEA member, EU accession country, neighbouring country, etc.) – unless the basic act specifically provides for it (with or without funding; e.g. for the H2020 programme, the work programme may list countries that are automatically eligible for participation and funding).

Third country - Depending on the context, this term refers either to a country that is not an EU member state or to a country that is neither an EU Member State nor an associated country.

6. What is a **Widening country**? And a **high-performing, research-intensive country**?

The **Composite indicator of Research Excellence** (with a corrective threshold of 70% of the EU average) has been selected to distinguish those countries identified as **low R&I performing** or **Widening** countries. Among these are the following Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia,

Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Associated Countries (subject to valid association agreements of third countries with Horizon 2020) include: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, North Macedonia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine.

- The detailed scores of the composite indicator can be found on p. 5 (Excellence in S&T 2010) of the *Research and Innovation Performance in the EU Member States and Associated Countries 2013* at http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/pdf/state-of-theunion/2012/innovation_union_progress_at_country_level_2013.pdf

7. What are the Missions?

Partly inspired by the Apollo 11 mission to put a man on the moon, the **European Research and Innovation missions aim to deliver solutions to some of the greatest challenges facing our planet**. The Missions are an integral part of the Horizon Europe framework programme begun in 2021. Each mission is a **mandate to solve a pressing challenge in society** within a certain timeframe and budget.

- This short video explains the Mission concept: <https://youtu.be/KlvjfPgwDKg>

The role of RMAs in the Call for Proposals

Funding agencies regularly open calls for funding. A **call for proposals is a public competition for funding within a funding programme**. Often, these focus on specific R&I topics or groups of topics.

At the opening of the call, a group of **guiding documents** is generally made available to specify the set of rules applicable to the call and to define aspects such as: eligibility of applicants and institutions, maximum budget, indicated length for the project, eligibility of partners, eligibility of proposed activities, etc.

Typical guiding documents include:

- the Call's text*
- the work programme
- the guide for applicants
- the guide for evaluators
- ethical guidelines

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- *The Call text for a European programme, typically from Horizon 2020, follows a **uniform format**, regardless of the context:
 - 1) Heading containing basic information such as the name of the programme, name of the Call, type of action, date of publication and deadline.
 - 2) Specific challenge.
 - 3) Scope.
 - 4) Information on the amount of funding available and the expected duration of the project.
 - 5) Expected Impact.

RMA roles

Several professionals in Research Management intervene in various moments of the funding proposal elaboration, submission and implementation. Starting from the drawing of a Call and the preparation and submission of a project proposal to the implementation of the research project. Some of these professionals work for funding agencies or government bodies, while others work directly with the research teams who will be carrying out the approved projects.



Figure 15 -RMA roles related to research funding

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