



**U21 POSITION PAPER ON THE 9TH EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK  
PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

**March 2018**

## The role of the European Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation

The European framework programmes for research and innovation continue to represent an outstanding example of how collaboration in research and innovation can be organised and supported. The impact of these programmes is seen not only in Europe, but around the world.

Universitas 21 (U21) seeks to support the development of a strong and successful 9<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme (FP9). This paper focuses on the dimension on which we can speak with particular authority, given our position as the leading global network of research-intensive universities, namely the issue of international collaboration in research and innovation.

## Benefits of international collaboration in research and innovation

The major global challenges, such as sustainability, security and health, can only be addressed through international co-operation. Collaboration on research and innovation is a key pillar through which this co-operation can be delivered.

In addition to the obvious economic benefits to be gained from trading relationships based on shared knowledge outcomes, such an approach also delivers significant cultural and societal benefits.

We agree with the words of EU Commissioner Carlos Moedas: “To remain relevant and competitive, we need to engage more in science diplomacy and global scientific collaboration. It is not sufficient to only support collaborative projects; we need to enable partnerships between regions and countries.”

We also believe that the development of an international outlook is a vital component of researcher training, and support this within our network through a variety of schemes.

## Key message

**Strengthening global collaboration in research and innovation should be a key target of FP9, and the programme should seek to enhance supports, remove barriers and mobilise international commitment to that end.**

In this, we strongly support the recommendation of the Lamy report (LAB – FAB – APP) that international cooperation in research and innovation should be a trademark of EU research and innovation and stimulated through a centralised fund.

We note also the support for such cooperation from the position papers of a number of associations of leading European universities, such as CESAER, the Coimbra Group, the Guild and LERU, all of which include U21 members.

## Our experience of international collaboration in Horizon 2020

### EU members

Most of our EU members have seen a drop in both the numbers of projects and the percentage of projects including third country participants in Horizon 2020 (H2020), compared to the previous Framework.

Most have also experienced reduced interest from international partners in H2020 projects.

A number of members report a move towards bilateral arrangements for international collaborations and to a focus on strategic partners, separate from H2020.

### **Non-EU members:**

Overall, our non-EU members participate in a small and decreasing number of EU projects. Some (non-EU, non-US) members contrasted a decline in EU project participation in H2020 with an increase in collaboration with US partners over the same period.

This can be seen in the funding drawn down to date: while the total awarded under H2020 to our EU (+Swiss) members as of October 2017 was at 82.3% of the FP7 level, the total awarded to non-EU/non-CH members was just 11.6% of the FP7 level. This clearly illustrates the differing experiences of both cohorts within the programme, compared to FP7.

As with EU members, non-EU members are increasingly pursuing international collaboration through strategic partnerships and bilateral or multilateral funding opportunities.

Most countries have some form of co-funding/match funding arrangements for such collaborations, but these are not always easy to access or are heavily over-subscribed.

### **Recommendations**

We are concerned by the decline in participation by third countries in EU projects reported by U21 members and by the erosion of the networked model of project participation with a shift towards bilateral engagement. Our members report a number of reasons for this, including low visibility of the EU Framework Programme internationally, the lack of an engagement strategy around the programme, the lack of key targets or drivers, perceived complexity and the strong funding programmes that are available in other regions. Considering how participation might be supported to grow and flourish, we make the following recommendations for FP9.

#### **Commitment and supports**

There should be a clear and strategic commitment to international collaboration in research and innovation in FP9, underpinned by a central fund and supported through appropriate targeted mechanisms and structures. This commitment should include proactive interactions with third countries in order to build supports. This would clearly signal the importance to the EU of relationships beyond its borders.

#### **UN sustainable development goals**

As the only global network of universities to hold UN ECOSOC consultative status, U21 recommends that the globally important themes of the UN sustainable development goals are used as the basis of the mission-driven approach proposed for FP9.

#### **Clarity and communication**

Our members report a lack of information, or sometimes inconsistency in information, about opportunities for third-country participation, leading to uncertainty within consortia. We recommend improved communication around such opportunities in FP9.

We recommend that clearer mechanisms are put in place regarding the 'essentiality' of third country partners and how reviewers will assess this. At present, our members (both within and outside the EU) tell us that consortia are reluctant to risk adding a third-country partner to a project, due to the perceived risk of the whole project not being funded if the third-country partner is found to be non-essential and therefore not funded.

## Reducing complexity

Concerns remain about the complexity of the processes involving third-country participants. We recommend that steps be taken to reduce this complexity in FP9.

## Growing funding

While welcoming the recommendation of the Lamy report in support of international collaboration in research and innovation, we query the requirement for reciprocal co-funding or access to co-funding in the partner country. While we agree that this should normally be the expectation, there may be strategic reasons, in a small number of cases, for relaxing the requirement for reciprocity or co-funding.

## Brexit

Strong participation by UK researchers has been a key enabler of success in the Framework Programmes to date, and we recommend that a mechanism be found to maintain this.

## About U21

Founded in 1997, Universitas 21 (U21) is a global network of twenty-five research-intensive universities, committed to the development of internationally-focused higher education and research. All Universitas 21 member institutions are research-led, comprehensive universities providing a strong quality assurance framework to the network's activities.

U21 member universities work together to build relationships and connections across the globe, forging closer collaborations with academics and professionals than would be possible without the shared membership of U21. Through membership of the network, universities' students and staff participate in a variety of research, educational and mobility initiatives and have unique opportunities to share best practice and leading higher educational resources.

By working together, U21 members foster global citizenship and institutional innovation through research-inspired teaching and learning, student mobility, connecting students and staff, and wider advocacy for internationalisation.

## U21 Members (2017-2018):

|                                |  |                                  |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| University of Amsterdam        | University of Auckland                   | University of Birmingham         |
| University of British Columbia | Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile | University of Connecticut        |
| University of Delhi            | University College Dublin                | University of Edinburgh          |
| Fudan University               | University of Glasgow                    | University of Hong Kong          |
| University of Johannesburg     | Korea University                         | Lund University                  |
| University of Maryland         | University of Melbourne                  | McGill University                |
| Tecnologico de Monterrey       | University of Nottingham                 | University of New South Wales    |
| University of Queensland       | Shanghai Jiao Tong University            | National University of Singapore |
| Waseda University              | University of Zurich                     |                                  |

### **For further information**

U21 will be happy to discuss any aspect of this paper and to share our insights throughout the development of FP9.

### **Contact details**

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