

Response of the League of European Research Universities (LERU) to the proposed draft amendments to the Regulation for Horizon 2020 and the Specific Programmes implementing Horizon 2020.

In general, LERU is happy with the majority of the amendments proposed by Teresa Riera Madurell and Maria Da Graça Carvalho. We do however have some concerns as well. The most important points for LERU are the following:

1. LERU strongly supports the European Parliaments' demand for a **budget** for Horizon 2020 of 100 billion EUR.
2. We are however worried about the amendments to the **budget division** as proposed by Ms Madurell. In particular the percentage of the budget which would be attributed to the ERC is not acceptable.

We very much want to warn against a misinterpretation of the **ERC budget for H2020** as proposed by the European Commission (EC). Although the budget has increased significantly compared to the FP7 ERC budget, LERU wants to underline that the budget foreseen in the EC's proposal would only allow the ERC to more or less spend yearly from 2014 until 2020 what they will spend in the last year of FP7. It would even lead to a budget drop between 2013 and 2014, from 1.8 billion to 1.6 billion EUR. The first years of the ERC budget under FP7 were start up years in which the budget was considerably lower. Comparing the FP7 ERC budget with the proposed budget for H2020 makes therefore little sense.

The percentage of the budget attributed to ERC by Ms Madurell (15.7%) would lead to a lower budget for ERC compared to the EC's proposal, even if the EP's request for 98.2 billion is realized. LERU urges therefore to revise this percentage to ensure for ERC at the very least the budget which was proposed by the European Commission.

LERU very much welcomes the increase of **the budget of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions** as proposed by Ms Madurell. Both MSCA and ERC have proven to be very popular and successful programmes, motivating and attracting both junior and senior researchers for a research career in Europe. Both programmes deserve and need the necessary means in H2020 to help build Europe as a stronger knowledge-intensive society and realise a European Research Area.

3. In general LERU strongly supports the confirmation of **excellence as the main driver for Horizon 2020**. LERU is also pleased with the explicit acknowledgment of the **role of universities** in the research-innovation chain.
4. LERU very much welcomes the increased emphasis on bottom-up, fundamental research across all three priorities, with at least 15% of the budget of the "Societal challenges" priority and of the specific objective "leadership in enabling and industrial technologies" within the "Industrial Leadership" priority following a **bottom-up, research-driven** logic. We also support the striking of the right balance within the "Societal challenges" and the "Industrial leadership" priorities between smaller and bigger projects, taking into account the specific sector structure, type of activity, technology and research landscape.
5. LERU supports the emphasis on **gender** in all aspects of H2020. A balanced gender representation contributes to excellence in research, positively influences research outcomes and promotes the acceptance of scientific insights in society. The use of targets and indicators, as mentioned in

amendment (43) to Article 15 of the H2020 regulation, will have to be carefully examined so as not to detract from the overarching principle of funding the most excellent research. This approach, and how it can be put into action by universities, will be illustrated in an upcoming LERU paper on women in research.

6. LERU supports the adding of ‘Science’ to the ‘Future and Emerging Technologies’ (from FET to **FEST**). We also support the changes proposed for the role and composition of the FEST Board.
7. LERU supports better **synergies between the Structural Funds and Horizon 2020**. We do believe however that there should be a clear delineation between the two types of funding.
8. LERU also acknowledges the desirability to offer a **stairway of excellence** to lesser developed EU member states and supports the measures proposed by Maria Da Graça Carvalho, such as a twinning scheme, seals of excellence and ERA chairs. We do however believe that the ERC is not the right instrument to support ‘return grants’ and that such grants should not be financed from the H2020 budget. As an alternative to these ERC return grants, LERU proposes a ‘seal of excellence’ on positively evaluated Marie Skłodowska-Curie projects to researchers who wish to move to a less developed region that have not been able to achieve funding because of budgetary limitations.
9. LERU welcomes the **clarification under which circumstances PPPs and other ‘supplementary programmes’ can be set up**, through the amendment of Article 19.
10. LERU also supports the provisions for **Open Access**.