



POSITION PAPER ON HORIZON EUROPE

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UAS4EUROPE, the networking platform for Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) in Europe, welcomes the proposal for Horizon Europe, the EU research and innovation programme 2021-2027. We are convinced that UAS will have a strong role to play in the European research and innovation (R&I) landscape. At the core of our UAS's missions there is a strong focus on linking applied research with high-quality higher education. R&I-activities at our higher education institutions (HEI's) are of an interdisciplinary nature and serve to address the challenges and needs of the industry, public sector and meaningful engagement with society at large.

In general terms UASEUROPE supports the continuity of the three pillar structure of Horizon Europe, which provides a proper balance between fundamental research, applied sciences and innovation. However, the current proposal of the Horizon Europe programme also raises some issues where improvements should be made:

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- UAS4EUROPE proposes an increase of the Horizon Europe budget to at least **€120 billion**;
- To reach the goals as stated under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) the European Commission should **support a better inclusion of applied researchers**;
- The European Commission should ensure a better **integration of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts (SSHA)** in the second pillar of Horizon Europe. In addition, UAS4EUROPE supports the **separation of the cluster Inclusive and Secure Societies** into 'Inclusive & Creative Society', on the one hand, and a 'Secure Society'-cluster on the other;
- **Better indicators** need to be established to measure the exact societal impact of research-projects funded by the European Union. The incremental part of the innovation value-chain is too often forgotten. Therefore UAS4EUROPE strongly supports the proposed **extra investment in incremental research (800 million)** as suggested by the European Parliament-rapporteur Dan Nica (July 2018);
- **Transdisciplinary research** involving different stakeholders is at the heart of European R&I programmes. UAS are important breeding grounds for this type of research and provide excellent impact-oriented research results. **Funding of small- scale transdisciplinary projects** would increase active participation of UAS, together with partners from SMEs and start-ups, thus further stimulate the effectiveness of European research programmes;
- **UAS4EUROPE supports the mission oriented approach proposed by the European Commission.** Mission Boards should have a strong multi-disciplinary character thus **include representatives, researchers and/or experts from UAS.**

The overall proposed budget on Horizon Europe

Despite the fact that the European Commission (EC) is proposing an overall increase in the budget for Horizon Europe to € 94.1 billion, it is highly doubtful whether this investment will suffice for Europe to remain at the vanguard of the 'global competition for research and innovation'. UAS4EUROPE, like many other knowledge institutions, public organisations and the European Parliament (EP), is advocating for an increase of the Horizon Europe budget to at least €120 billion, as stated in the [UAS4EUROPE FP9 position paper \(September 2017\)](#) and included in the proposed amendments by the EP-rapporteurs Christian Ehler and Dan Nica (July 2018).

Furthermore, UAS4EUROPE calls for a smooth budgetary and operational transition between the two framework programmes Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. Funding gaps would lead to the outflux of promising research-and innovation projects to other global knowledge hubs.

Pillar 1: investing in mobility

UAS4EUROPE believes it is essential to invest in the mobility, training and career development of researchers. To this purpose, the EC has successfully supported the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) for over 22 years. However, even though in theory UAS can participate in the MSCA, in practice the MSCA schemes such as the Individual Fellowships, the Innovative Training Networks or the Research and Innovation Staff Exchanges focus mainly on candidates from fundamental science-oriented universities.

Therefore UAS4EUROPE calls upon the EC to **support the inclusion of applied researchers** – working in UAS - in the MSCA. The EC should introduce an evaluation scheme that includes and appreciates the merits of candidates who have a background in applied research and innovation. In addition, University of Applied sciences should be recognized and acknowledged as host institutions for MSCA fellows. Indeed, there are clear advantages for researchers to be hosted by UAS, for instance in terms of employability enhancement. Moreover, the inclusion of UAS in MSCA consortia would support a smoother cooperation between industry and academia, given the applied nature of the research carried out in these institutions.

Pillar 2: investing in Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness

UAS4EUROPE supports the proposed investment in the Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness pillar. **Impact-driven research**, with a concrete European added-value, should be at the heart of this second pillar.

- a. Firstly, European added value is best gained by funding research projects that are impact-driven, and should be at the heart of allocating European research funds. Therefore **better indicators** need to be established to measure more accurately the societal impact of research-projects funded by the European Union. Innovative applied research, as conducted at UAS, has a strong focus on achieving concrete societal impact. These impact-indicators should be clear and transparent, thus implemented in such a way that it will not result in an increased administrative burden for the stakeholders and beneficiaries involved.
- b. Secondly, UAS4EUROPE strongly recommends a **better integration of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts (SSHA)** in the second pillar of Horizon Europe: in order to achieve a broader societal understanding and approach of the global challenges. The integration of SSHA should be regarded as a trivial matter, and not only as an accessory obligation to participate in the call. Therefore, the support of multidisciplinary projects should be further encouraged, not only in theory, but also in practice. SSHA experts have to be involved in all stages, from drafting the work programmes, framing the topics to evaluating proposals. A more accurate monitoring system should be implemented to evaluate and monitor the participation of SSHA in the different stages of the process.

- c. Thirdly, UAS4EUROPE supports the recommendation by EP-rapporteurs Nica and Ehler to **separate the cluster Inclusive and Secure Societies** into ‘Inclusive & Creative Society’, on the one hand, and a ‘Secure Society’-cluster on the other.
- d. Lastly, **obtaining 21st century skills** lays at the foundation of our future European research landscape and society as a whole. Without excellent education, Europe cannot excel in R&I . This should include a greater emphasis on meta-cognitive ‘soft skills’ such as creativity and critical thinking. UAS play a key role in training young people into becoming critical, creative, entrepreneurial and problem-solving European citizens that have the right set of skills to tackle global challenges. Hence, **research on science education** should play an important role in European framework programmes. Whereas Horizon 2020 ‘Science with and for Society’ (SwafS) addressed this issue to a certain extent, it is missing in the Horizon Europe proposal. UAS4EUROPE encourages an integration of these activities in the Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness Pillar.

Pillar 3: more space for open innovation through EIC/EIT/innovation-ecosystems

UAS4EUROPE welcomes the Open Innovation pillar as proposed by the EC. Through this third pillar, the European Innovation Council (EIC) provides meaningful support for high-risk projects. This is also in line with the recommendations made by Dr Mariana Mazzucato (Feb. 2018): *“Take risks, but make successes really matter”*.

- a. However, because of an ever-increasing focus on breakthrough or market-creating innovation, the incremental part of the innovation value-chain is too often forgotten within the proposal of Horizon Europe. Therefore, UAS4EUROPE strongly supports the proposed **extra investment of 800 million for incremental innovation** as suggested by EP-rapporteur Dan Nica (July 2018).
- b. The EIC will have a High Level Advisory Board (EIC Board) to assist the Commission in implementing the EIC. In addition, the Commission will appoint on a temporary basis a number of EIC programme managers with the tasks of overseeing the implementation of the Pathfinder calls, proposing evaluation rankings and reviewing projects. In order to create genuine European added value, it is important that both the EIC Board and the programme management level have a vast understanding of applied research. The best means to guarantee this would be to **nominate at least one person from the UAS sector to the EIC Board**.
- c. UAS4EUROPE welcomes the fact that the EC would like to build better innovation ecosystems (IES) that will aim at improving the environment in which innovations can flourish. In these IES **UAS can play an important regional role in delivering concrete research outcomes through Smart Partnerships for Regional Impact** (see a previous [paper](#) of UAS4EUROPE) by providing a strong link between research, industry, public authorities and end-users. In this regard, UAS4EUROPE strongly opposes the suggested amendment by EP-rapporteur Dan Nica to allocate *“at least 80% of EIC budget”* solely for start-ups and SME’s. Instead, the EIC should focus on the interlinkages between all participating stakeholders in the IES, thus enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation and partnerships.

Furthermore UAS4EUROPE believes that the participation rules of Horizon Europe should be modified to stimulate the creation of a European-wide **network of excellence-and impact based knowledge hubs**. This could be fostered by ensuring that future joint programmes are not only managed by national innovation agencies, but instead allow national, regional and local IES to represent a given country in a consortium.

Involvement of stakeholders

UAS4EUROPE strongly believes in the statement ‘science for the people and with the people’ and fully **supports a more active involvement of citizens and end-users to maximize the European added value of the framework programme.** The mission-oriented research approach within Horizon Europe is key to involve European citizens in the European research and innovation programmes.

- a. UAS4EUROPE agrees that missions should spark activity across disciplines and be open to multiple, bottom-up solutions. In order to achieve this, **Mission Boards should have a strong multi-disciplinary character and consist of stakeholders from different disciplines and backgrounds, including representatives, researchers and/or experts from UAS.** Including UAS-institutions in the Mission Boards will improve the interconnectedness between all relevant stakeholders, such as SMEs, start-ups and industry, higher education institutions, public authorities and citizens.
- b. Transdisciplinary applied research involving different stakeholders of the whole R&I value chain is a backbone of European R&I programmes and is an absolute necessity to tackle complex global challenges. UAS are important breeding grounds for this type of research and provide excellent impact-oriented research results. Firstly, UAS4EUROPE is convinced that more funding for **small scale transdisciplinary projects** (e.g. 500k) would increase active participation of SMEs, not-for-profit organisations, UAS and programme-‘newcomers’ leading to a more interdisciplinary approach of the global challenges. Hence, work programmes and calls should include more simplified application procedures, thus be designed in such a way that more smaller-scale projects are set-up naturally. Secondly, initiatives should be taken to stimulate a **renewed dialogue** between the fundamental science-oriented research universities and the more practice-based actors such as UAS, SMEs ,start-ups. This could be done, for example, by allocating extra budget to consortia with different stakeholders.

Simplification and Openness of Horizon Europe

- a. UAS4EUROPE welcomes the measures presented by the EC in the proposal of Horizon Europe regarding **simplification**. Keep the administrative burden as low as possible and ensure that the rules for participation remain as simple as possible. In this regard we support the EC’s proposal to hold on to the three-pillar-system of Horizon Europe.
- b. We welcome the **extended possibility for third countries** to become an associated member to the framework programme: UAS cooperate with professional organisations, companies and research institutes on a global scale. We stress that fair rules for association to the Programme should be spelled out, in order to allow cooperation with excellent partners across the globe to drive excellence and maximize impact. As already expressed in our response to proposed amendments, UAS4EUROPE welcomes the amendment suggested by the draft report of the European Parliament in Horizon Europe (by EP-rapporteur Dan Nica, 9th July 2018) on Art. 12.1.a of Horizon Europe **extending this category to all EFTA countries and thus allowing Switzerland to participate in the Programme as it currently does with Horizon 2020.** However, UAS4EUROPE is opposed to the modifications introduced by Dan Nica to the Art. 12.2 which excludes associated countries mentioned in Art. 12.1.d from mono-beneficiary grants. It underlines the fact that research is international and only successful if it is conducted in an environment fostering both collaboration (beyond political barriers) and competition, allowing it to produce new knowledge and innovation for the well-being of society.
- c. The principle of **open science and research** is essential for the framework programme and emphasises the impact and the added value that Horizon Europe will provide for the whole continent and its citizens. With respect to this, it is important to verify that the framework programme **is result-oriented and impact-driven.** The EU-funded activities should lead to results and outputs that are available for application and use, or at least result to a proof of concept type of expression demonstrating their feasibility.

Synergies with other programmes

UAS4EUROPE calls for a continued discussion on how to further attain synergies within European research budgeting. In particular this would concern the following programmes:

- a. **Structural Funds:** firstly UAS4EUROPE welcomes the harmonisation of rules and the exemption from the State Aid Rules to allow for more synergies. Secondly, UAS4EUROPE believes that Structural Funds should continue to be **available for all the EU Member States**. Thirdly, a major concern for UAS is the proposed smaller budget for the Structural Funds. We strongly recommend that the right priorities should be set to counteract the financial reduction, i.e. giving priority to R&I projects and to allow adequate investment in smart specialization strategies (see [UAS4EUROPE-paper](#) on Smart Partnerships for Regional Impact (SPFRI)).
- b. **Digital Europe programme:** UAS4EUROPE supports the set-up of the newly formed Digital Europe programme with its target of five different areas (Artificial intelligence (AI), supercomputers, cybersecurity and trust, digital skills and ensuring a wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society). Additionally, UAS4EUROPE supports the idea that Digital Europe will not only focus on technologies, but also on market deployment and uptake, infrastructures, skills and digital innovation hubs. The EC should ensure a clear distinction between what will be covered by Digital Europe and what by Horizon Europe. While Horizon Europe should provide investments in R&I, Digital Europe should create the necessary infrastructure, as well as supporting deployment and capacity building, providing the necessary input for future research in AI, robotics, etc.
- c. **Erasmus+:** Horizon Europe will support the modernisation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) via 'Strengthening the European Research Area'. Therefore, synergies will naturally be sought with the Erasmus programme. A concrete action, where both programmes team up, is the 'European Universities' that should foster the integration of education and R&I (see UAS4EUROPE [paper](#) on the European Universities). Horizon Europe and Erasmus+, should endorse the development of 'European Universities. **To maximize its impact all European Universities need to include different types of higher education institutions, including UAS.**

UAS RESEARCH

UAS place a strong emphasis on a deep entanglement of providing high-quality higher education, scientific research and social services, which translate into practical training, practical applications and practical innovation. In the UAS, knowledge valorisation and practice-oriented scientific research is intertwined with the educational activities, such as labs, projects and, not the least, through internships and workplace learning.

The UAS focus on two priorities:

1. Applied research, which encompasses practice-oriented R&I activities;
2. Delivering applied and practice-oriented tertiary education, which includes specialised degrees with an explicit professional orientation. This professional orientation during their studies makes the UAS student a useful contributor to the labour market and increases the graduate's working life and employability skills



What is UAS4EUROPE?

UAS4EUROPE is a networking platform, the voice of European universities of applied sciences (UAS), in the field of applied research and innovation.

The network represents the five founding organisations:

- European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (**EURASHE**), representing over 600 institutions in over 40 countries within and outside the European Higher Education area
- Universities of Applied Sciences Network (**UASnet**), representing over 150 institutions in 8 European countries through national Rectors' Conferences
- **swissuniversities**, representing Swiss institutions of higher education (7 UAS)
- **Hochschule Bayern e.V.**, representing the 20 Bavarian Universities of Applied Sciences
- **Austrian FHK**, representing all 21 Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences

Want to know more about UAS4EUROPE, or how to get involved?

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