

Written statement on Horizon Europe and FP10 to the High-Level Expert Group

[UAS4EUROPE](#) is an informal network of 150+ Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) in the European Research Area (ERA). On 6 March 2024, we have published our FP10 position “[Towards 2028](#)”, which includes ten specific suggestions for Horizon Europe’s successor programme. The key messages of the paper are as follows:

- As a result of increasingly complex demands by the labour market, **growing research capabilities are being implemented at UAS**, leading to increased interest in international research collaborations.
- Following the introduction of pillars 2 and 3 in Horizon Europe, **UAS are increasingly attracted to the EU’s Framework Programme for R&I**.
- The EU’s Framework Programme for R&I and the discussion thereof should better reflect the **complementary nature of basic and applied research**.
- Geopolitical developments and their implications on the EU’s political priorities justify an **increase in the FP’s budget to 200 billion euros**.

We appreciate the effort of the High-Level Expert Group to structure the discussion and are herewith answering to the four guiding questions.

1. What major challenges should still be addressed in the second half of Horizon Europe and further addressed by a future FP?

We consider the following list of topics to be of utmost priority in the funding decisions of EU programmes:

- **Net-zero technologies** (R&D and deployment)
- **Future mobility** (urban and rural)
- **Deep tech**: Biotech, 5G/6G, AI, Quantum, incl. their deployment and application in an interplay between UAS and SMEs

In addition to the thematic priorities, we identify two holistic necessities:

- **Societal uptake and literacy** of new innovations / technologies (SRLs)
- **International collaboration with like-minded partners** (i.e. Switzerland) especially in times of geopolitical tensions and an increased focus on research security

2. Which are the major successes of Horizon Europe and which are the major “roadblocks”/threats to its success?

We consider the **three-pillar structure** to be a clear success of Horizon Europe that ensures the coverage of the entire knowledge and innovation value chain covering fundamental research, applied sciences, and the valorisation of knowledge. Of particular importance for UAS is the **impact-orientation of the programme**. The collaborative R&I projects under Pillar 2 foster partnerships across sectors with a great European added value. UAS are able to make most out of their complementary strengths in such projects, as their R&I activities focus on transdisciplinary challenges and foster lasting regional impact. Challenges, however, are posed by:

- the continuous **delays in Work Programme adoptions** that lead to their publications only a couple of days before the first Calls are opened.

- **Long evaluation timelines** scare off many UAS and SMEs who in many cases work in shorter innovation cycles.
- RIAs/IAs often include 10+ consortium partners, which makes **projects very challenging to manage**. This is not a meaningful incentive for younger and/or smaller universities to engage, let alone coordinate, EU projects.
- **Horizon Europe has too often been used as a fall-back option for funding** of changing or evolving political priorities, which caused uncertainties around a shrinking budget (see e.g. Chips Act, STEP)
- The **lacking participation of industrial partners**, whom UAS are working very closely with, poses a growing threat to meeting the objectives of Horizon Europe.

3. Which sub-programmes of Horizon Europe should be preserved and strengthened in a future FP and which should be altered? How far a future FP should keep/alter the current basic three-pillar architecture of Horizon Europe?

We call for the **three-pillar structure to be preserved with more opportunities for UAS in pillar 1** (i.e. in the MSCA). We further advocate for the continuation of collaborative R&I activities funded from the thematic clusters under Pillar 2, as these projects generate long-lasting impact and foster European cross-sectoral partnerships. However, in order to attract UAS (and SMEs), a **diversification of project sizes** is needed, both in terms of the number of consortium partners and the project durations themselves. In addition, **less prescriptive and more open Calls** that are flagged as such are needed to give researchers and innovators the necessary space to develop their visions.

Problems have been encountered with the Horizon Europe Missions. UAS can act as “catalysers” of the Missions as a result of their regional embeddedness. However, challenges remain as regards their **horizontal alignment across national ministries**. In addition, Horizon Europe should **only fund the R&I component of the Missions**, with plug-in funding from other sources for activities such as capacity-building.

In general, we consider it important to highlight that the European Commission should have the **courage to disband programme parts, if they are widely considered to be underperforming**.

4. What would be a catalyst to overcome the current roadblocks of Horizon Europe and be implemented in a future FP? What should be the most important innovations to be considered in a future FP?

We consider the following recommendations to be a great source of improvement for the future of the EU’s Framework Programme for R&I:

- **Diversification of project sizes** (both in terms of consortium partners and project durations)
- **More open topics** that are marked as such (not “hidden” like in WP23-25)
- Increased budget of **200 billion euros**
- In-depth analysis of existing funding sources and **elimination of potential overlaps**
- Strengthening the socio-technological uptake and literacy of new innovations through the **introduction of a light societal readiness concept that does not add red-tape** to the applicants. A Do-No-Significant-Harm principle must be scrapped however as it poses more questions than it answers.



UAS4EUROPE – Who we are

Founded in 2016, UAS4EUROPE is an informal network representing 150 Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) in the European Research Area (ERA). The network aims to strengthen the visibility and inclusion of UAS in ERA-related R&I policies and programmes by providing a platform for knowledge exchange and policy advocacy.