



Attention: News desks/ Science and Education correspondents

For immediate release

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Horizon 2020: simplification never ends

Last Friday, 25 September 2015, Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research and Innovation and the leadership team of his Directorate General came together to listen to the view of key stakeholders on the simplification of Horizon 2020. On this occasion the European Commission also launched a [survey](#) to collect further contributions.

The European University Association (EUA) ensured that the view of Europe's universities was heard at the event and provided input based on the feedback of its diverse membership on key issues such as the basic funding model as well as management processes.

EUA and other stakeholders have acknowledged the efforts by the European Commission, leading to simplification in a number of areas such as the participant portal or the reduction of the time to grant. Apart from a variety of aspects that could still be improved, two main concerns were raised, namely the low success rate of applications and the funding model. Thomas Estermann, Director for Governance, Funding and Public Policy Development at EUA pointed to the link with national funding trends: "As we know from [EUA's Public Funding Observatory](#), many systems have been suffering from severe cuts in public funding over the past years. Therefore more and more universities look for EU funding and thus the success rate goes down." While it will be important to improve the two-step application process, EUA called to protect H2020 from further cuts, as happened with the European Fund for Strategic Investments ([EFSI](#)), a loan scheme for which 2.2 billion € were recently taken away from the programme. Cuts like these will further exacerbate the problem. "In times of national budget cuts [Europe needs to fund universities](#) through grants like H2020 and not divert public money to debt financing mechanisms", Estermann explained at the meeting.

The other important issue that came up in the discussions is the funding model for research projects, fixed with 100% direct costs (for non-profit organisations) and a flat rate of 25% of direct costs to cover indirect costs. During the negotiations on the [rules for participation](#), EUA proposed including an additional model taking account of national and institutional accounting practices that are based on full costing. While the flat rate model might help the European Commission in managing the programme, it means that those universities that have full costing methodologies in place have to set up a parallel process for H2020 project management. This is an issue that should be considered in the mid-term review of the programme, EUA argued, and Commissioner Moedas confirmed that this would be the case.

On a more technical level, EUA asked at the meeting to solve open issues on the use of actual personnel costs and productive hours. With regard to this, EUA proposed to use the findings of its [EUIMA project](#) which collected a number of case studies showcasing different time allocation models in place in universities across Europe.

EUA is looking forward to continuing the constructive dialogue on simplification and sustainability of EU funding programmes with the EU institutions and will launch a broader consultation process with its members to provide evidence-based input to the debate.

ENDS

Notes:

- [EUA's Public Funding Observatory](#) analyses every year the evolution of public funding to universities across Europe.
- [Adoption of EFSI leaves EUA research with a limp](#), 25 June 2015
- [EUA calls on European Parliament to defend research funding in upcoming EU budget](#), 8 September 2015
- [EUA Input to the Debate on the Rules for Participation in Horizon 2020](#), May 2012
- The [EUIMA project](#) promoted the development of full costing methodologies in universities across Europe (2010-2012).

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The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.