

## European Internationalization Strategies

**IN 2010** the European Commission launched its far-reaching initiative, “Europe 2020,” which European Commission President José Manuel Barroso described as “the EU’s growth strategy for the coming decade.” He said, “In a changing world, we want the EU to become a smart, sustainable, and inclusive economy. These three mutually reinforcing priorities should help the EU and the member states deliver high levels of employment, productivity, and social cohesion.” The European Union (EU) set five ambitious objectives with Europe 2020—on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion, and climate/energy—all to be reached by 2020, and each member state adopted their own national targets in each of these objectives.

But why is Europe 2020 important to the realm of higher education and research? How does it affect students, researchers, and administrators in universities and research institutions in Europe and all over the world? The answer is simple: education, science, and research have a special role to play within the Europe 2020 strategy. A concise documentation of all activities and projects summarized under the umbrella of Europe 2020 would be too lengthy for this article, so only two of the most relevant programs will be discussed here: Horizon 2020 and ERASMUS+, both agreed upon by the EU parliament and the EU council at the end of 2013.

**“In a changing world, we want the EU to become a smart, sustainable, and inclusive economy.”**

To understand the political will and power behind the overall Europe 2020 initiative, it is important to know that the European Union sees it not only as a 10-year growth and jobs strategy per se but as a set of programs to overcome the current economic crisis. It is seen as the means to addressing the shortcomings of the hitherto existing growth model and to create conditions for a smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.<sup>1</sup>

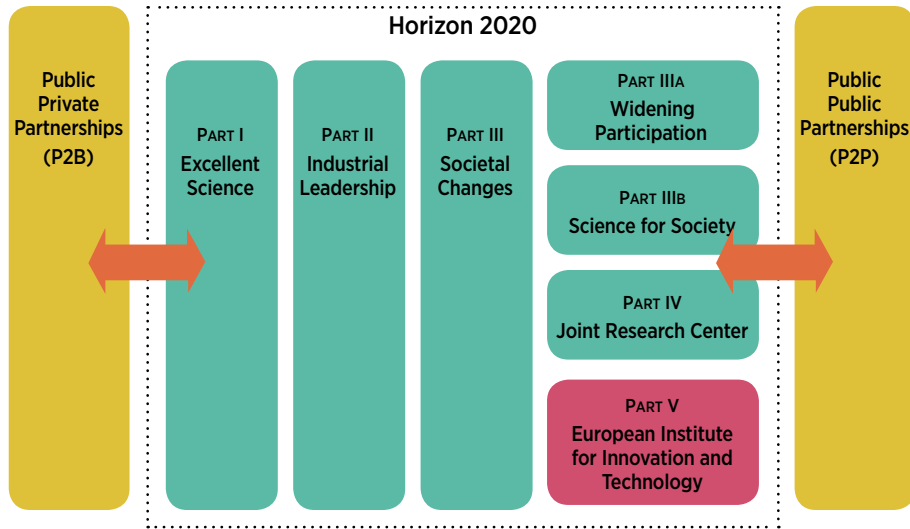
Five overarching goals are targeted for the end of the decade. They are supported by seven so-called “Flagship Initiatives” providing something like a toolbox through which the EU and national authorities mutually reinforce their efforts in areas supporting the Europe 2020 priorities, which are: innovation, the digital economy, employment, youth, industrial policy, poverty, and resource efficiency.

### Research

Under the target “Smart growth” the Flagship Initiative “Innovation Union”<sup>2</sup> is of special interest for academics all over the world, because here we can find the magical words “Horizon 2020”—this program being the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union. Horizon 2020 had very prominent predecessors—the seven so-called Framework Programs (FP). But Horizon 2020 exceeds them all: With a budget of €80 billion (about US\$105 billion) for the seven year period from 2014 to 2020, the new framework program boasts an increase of 27 percent compared to FP7. This is not the only new aspect: Horizon 2020 focuses more strongly on the current market and relies more heavily on collaboration between science and industry. The Commission intends this to lead to a greater participation of small- and medium-size enterprises, especially as the whole application process and administration of the funding schemes will be less bureaucratic. The program is especially designed to enhance projects that tackle the main challenges of the future for Europe: It puts an emphasis on excellent science and industrial leadership, and will address societal challenges to ensure Europe produces world-class science, removes barriers to innovation, and makes it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation.<sup>3</sup>

As it is stated on the official website, “...Horizon 2020 is open to everyone, with a simple structure that reduces red tape and time...This approach makes sure new projects get off the ground quickly—and achieve results faster. The EU Framework Program for Research and Innovation will be complemented by further measures to complete and further develop the European Research Area. These mea-

## EU-Research and Innovation 2014–2020 (Base)



Source: KoWi/European Liaison Office of the German Research Organisation

ures will aim at breaking down barriers to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research, and innovation.”<sup>4</sup>

Horizon 2020 offers a number of different funding streams and is basically divided in five parts, three of which cover the innovation process from idea to product: scoping for science-driven (basic) research in “Excellent Science”; enhancing of economic competitiveness in “Industrial Leadership,” tackling of the pressing issues for the European citizen in “Societal Challenges.”<sup>5</sup>

For the first time, this framework program brings together three former-

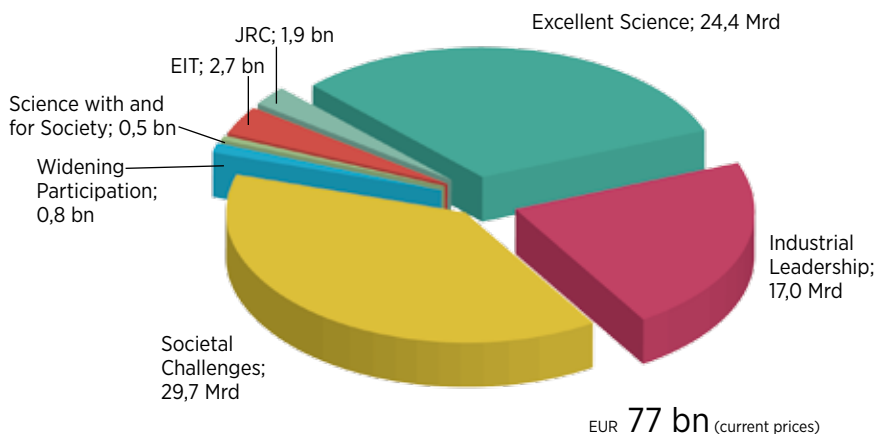
ly different initiatives: the old Research Framework Program (FP7), the innovation aspects of the Competitiveness and Innovations Framework Program (CIP), and the EU contribution to the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). The Horizon 2020 budget including the Joint Research Council (JRC, Part 4) and the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT, Part 5), as well as the accompanying funding measures such as the Private Public Partnerships (P2B) or Public Public Partnerships (P2P)<sup>6</sup>, is distributed as shown in the graph titled “Horizon 2020.”

### Mobility

In their Europe 2020 strategy, the EU heads of state and government have also set several ambitious quantitative goals regarding higher education: By the end of the current decade, at least 40 percent of 30- to 34-year-olds should hold a higher education degree (2013: EU average 37 percent). In terms of promoting mobility, the EU adopted the Bologna objective: by 2020, it intends to ensure that at least 20 percent of higher education graduates have had a study-related experience abroad of a minimum of 3 months or 15 ECTS (European Credit Transferred Accumulation System). EU countries should also be spending 3 percent of GDP on research and innovation by 2020. To achieve these goals, both the EU member states and the European Commission are being called on to implement appropriate measures.

On the EU level, the new mobility program plays a pivotal part in the equation: ERASMUS+ (the program for education, training, youth, and sport) will provide a budget of €14.7 billion (about US\$20 billion) over the next seven years, which is an increase of 40 percent compared to current spending levels. Thus, the EU truly underpins its commitment to investing in the education and international experience of its people. The declared aim is to support the mobility of more than 4 million people in the years to come, amongst them 2 million students in higher education and around 650,000 students in vocational training. As in the former ERASMUS programs, staff mobility is also an integral part of ERASMUS+, with an estimated 800,000 lecturers, teachers, trainers, education staff, and youth workers gaining experience abroad. A new focus is given to master’s degrees with an international edge, as around 200,000 students will be able to apply successfully for a loan for a full degree abroad. There will be 135,000 grants given to students and staff who embark on exchanges

### Horizon 2020 Budget



Source: KoWi/European Liaison Office of the German Research Organisation



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## FORUM

with countries outside Europe. Approximately 34,000 scholarships will be given to fund joint master's degree courses.

All these funding lines fall under the target "learning mobility," which shall provide not only more but also better mobility. Hence, the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education has to be adopted by all participating institutions, ensuring for example the recognition of credits achieved abroad as well as certain quality standards for the single programs.

"Cooperation" is the second major target of ERASMUS+. Here, the strategic partnerships possibly will be the most prominent funding stream. Meant to intensify structured and long-term cooperation among higher education institutions and/or other educational institutions, strategic partnerships can be formed between at least three institutions from at least three different EU countries. The so called "knowledge alliances," however, will help to link higher education institutions and enterprises.

### Outlook

Combined, Horizon 2020 and ERASMUS+ allocate enormous funds for participating institutions, enterprises, and individuals: the equivalent of around US\$125 billion will be provided over the years to come. This is a sincere commitment, especially considering the overall EU budget has decreased recently. At the same time, it is still a relatively small sum if compared to the aggregated financial means of all national European research and higher education budgets combined. Hence, the EU explicitly puts it to all its member states as well as to all European universities to think and act globally. In July 2013, the Commission published its *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, European higher education in the world.*<sup>7</sup> The Communication suggests measures for strategic internationalization in three main areas:

■ Promoting international staff and student mobility;

■ Promoting "internationalization at home"—new curricula and digital learning (via MOOCs);

■ Strengthening strategic cooperation, partnerships, and capacity building.

The Commission sees the suggested set of measures as a "toolbox" from which each higher education institution can choose the specific instruments fitting to its own internationalization strategy. Some of these will be sponsored by Horizon 2020 and ERASMUS+, by far the bigger number will have to be financed by the member states through their own budgets.

So will all this money really make Europe more successful in the worldwide race to attract the brightest and most innovative minds?

There are, of course, some obstacles still to be overcome, even inside the EU. As the funding process of Horizon 2020 is strictly driven by the excellence and quality of the competing research proposals, some of the smaller or younger member states are in danger of falling by the wayside. Irrespective of the excellence of their individual scientists, not all of the 28 countries can yet provide competitive research facilities. Thus, as a prerequisite, the financial aid via the European Regional Development Fund will have to be used to boost those country's research systems.

With the new research framework program, the EU also wants to reach the aim of a joint and single European Research Area (ERA) in due course. This aim is supported by the national governments, but at the same time, it interferes with the single national research and innovation strategies, especially as the EU budget—for Horizon 2020 and other programs—of course always has the direct influence of the funding available within each contributing member state. Apart from that fact, much still remains to be done at the national level, such as the portability of pensions, social benefits, national grants, or the open recruitment of researchers across Europe, to name but a few.

Nevertheless, the combined European and national funds allocated toward research, innovation, education, and mobility

will certainly make Europe more attractive to students and researchers from within and from outside the Union. ERC grants, for example, one of the most prominent funding schemes in the “Excellent Science” branch of Horizon 2020, will be available to applicants from all over the world.<sup>8</sup> Once they win the grant, they simply need to work at an institution inside the EU. With the funding for exchanges with students and staff from outside the EU in the ERASMUS+ chapter “Learning Mobility,” the influx of people and knowledge from countries outside the club of 28 is also guaranteed. And as the money provided by all the instruments connected to the Europe 2020 strategy quite simply will make the European higher education institutions and the overall research area stronger, they provide more chances to people who come to the EU—be it on an EU ticket or one of the 28 national ones. Academic cooperation inside the EU, fostered by the described measures, is a powerful tool to overcome the current identity crisis of the Union. It will hopefully help to sustain prosperity and growth in many fields of the Union. But it should also support Europe’s ambition to become one of the most attractive destinations for study and research worldwide. **IE**

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**(ENDNOTES)**

- 1 [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/index_en.htm)
- 2 [http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index\\_en.cfm?pg=home](http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=home)
- 3 <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/what-horizon-2020>
- 4 <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/what-horizon-2020>
- 5 [http://www.kowi.de/en/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-452/1360\\_read-2481/](http://www.kowi.de/en/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-452/1360_read-2481/)
- 6 [http://www.kowi.de/en/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-452/1360\\_read-2481/](http://www.kowi.de/en/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-452/1360_read-2481/)
- 7 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0499:FIN:en:PDF>
- 8 There are three ERC core funding schemes and two additional schemes: ERC Starting Grants, ERC Consolidator Grants, ERC Advanced Grants, ERC Proof of Concept Grants, ERC Synergy Grants; <http://erc.europa.eu/funding-schemes>

# ADVERTISER'S Index

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATOR | JULY+AUG.2014

Ascension Benefits & Insurance Solutions .....	17
Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE) .....	9
CaMLA .....	13
College Year in Athens .....	55
Cort Furniture .....	33
ELS Educational Services .....	Back cover
ETS - TOEFL .....	Inside front cover
ETS - GRE .....	Inside back cover
ETS - GRE .....	3
Gateway WorldMed .....	7
HTH Worldwide .....	5
International Education Fairs of Turkey (IEFT) .....	31
NAFSA Call for Proposals .....	45
NAFSA EA Webinars .....	54
NAFSA 2014 Online Conference .....	51
University of San Diego .....	11