

Contribution of the Leibniz Association to the consultation “Horizon Europe Co-design – Implementation”

2 October 2019

With the present statement the Leibniz Association contributes to the European Commission's open online consultation on the Horizon Europe implementation strategy. In parallel, the Leibniz institutes will contribute individually to the online consultation based on their experience with the proposal preparation and administration of Horizon 2020 funded projects.

1. Work programme

The Leibniz Association supports the publication of **multiannual work programmes** as this offers scientists the opportunity to mobilise their partners and networks and start the proposal preparation early on. Within the structure of the work programmes, however, it should be **distinguished between current and future calls**. The main section of the work programme should focus on calls for the year in question, while an outlook on future calls could be part of an annex to the work programme, in order to avoid extensive topic lists. The **decision of the most appropriate types of actions for each topic should lie with the European Commission (EC)**.

The **Missions** are to play an essential role within the implementation strategy of Horizon Europe and should therefore **closely relate to all cluster and partnership activities**, as well as activities from pillar I and III. The **Mission Boards must be enabled to identify missing gaps** so that new calls can be initiated if deemed necessary for the achievement of the missions' aims.

2. Submission and Evaluation

Our experience with the FPs submission and evaluation processes over the last 20 years has shown that, for various reasons, one-stage and two-stage calls find their advocates. The Leibniz Association, therefore, recommends to **maintain both one-stage and two-stage call procedures**. However, we propose that the project evaluation in stage one and stage two should be **conducted by the same evaluation panel** in order to avoid contradictory assessments between both steps. Also, a **success rate of around 30 percent must be targeted at stage two**. The provision of the Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) at stage one should be maintained.

3. Model Grant Agreement

The Leibniz Association strongly supports the idea of **one Model Grant Agreement (MGA) for all EU funding programmes** as it would help to create synergies and facilitate links between them. A consistent MGA with harmonised rules will simplify administration procedures for the participating institutions and reduce error rates. We recommend that the European Commission highlights even more clearly that the **Annotated MGA is a user guide** which has the function of explaining applicants and beneficiaries the MGA and is, therefore, **not legally binding** in itself.

As regards the Horizon 2020 provisions for the calculation of the personnel costs the Leibniz Association recommends to apply the following calculation:

EU grant personnel costs Researcher A during reporting period =

$$\text{Total personnel costs}^1 \text{ during reporting period} \times \frac{\text{EU grant productive hours}^1 \text{ during reporting period}}{\text{Total productive hours}^1 \text{ during reporting period}}$$

This formula for the calculation of the personnel costs in EU projects is based on cumulated actual costs and productive hours. This could reduce error rates significantly as it has to be applied to each researcher only once at the end of each reporting period instead of each month or each calendar year. In addition, it would reflect the actual costs incurred within the project and not be based on historical data.

Another, even simpler, method would be to **accept the beneficiaries' usual accounting practices**, without the need for individual time recordings.

4. Dissemination and Exploitation

The Leibniz Association recommends that **reporting beyond the lifetime of the project**, as suggested by the EC, should be **applied only on a voluntary basis** and be limited to a period of up to two years after the end of the project. The reason for this is that project-related cost units might have been closed down after project completion and project staff might have left the institution. The exploitation of project results with high Technology Readiness Levels might be enhanced with measures such as the ERC-grant Proof of Concept (PoC) or calls in pillar III. To create synergies between funding activities from the three pillars, in particular those funding activities that might relate to the missions, **coordination and support actions could act as platforms for complementary projects** to evaluate outputs, synergies and set up outreach activities.

5. Data and Reporting

For the above mentioned reasons reporting obligations beyond the usual reporting requirements should not apply after the end of a project (in particular related to the researchers involved in the project and the exploitation of the results). Under Horizon 2020, **project reporting related to dissemination and exploitation** is still very complex and time-consuming and therefore **needs to be simplified**. For the very same reason **the periodic reporting process in the EU Funding & Tenders Portal should be accessible some months ahead of the end of the reporting period**.

6. Control Strategy

The Leibniz Association considers that the financial reporting requirements under the current control strategy are well established and approved by the participants and should, thus, be maintained in Horizon Europe. We consider the introduction of **"System and Processes Audits" (SPA)** as a certificate on the methodology a **good approach, provided the procedure is not too complicated**, especially if it will connect to other EU funding programmes. The SPA should apply to the entire term of Horizon Europe.

¹ Researcher A

7. Extended use of simplified forms of costs

The introduction of lump sums for collaborative research projects would result in higher workload for applicants and coordinators during the proposal preparation phase as cost calculations and related work packages have to be structured with much more detail. Each consortium member would only receive their projects funds after the completion of each work package / deliverable making the reception of payment dependent on the performance of all participating beneficiaries. As a result, a coordinator applying for a lump sum project would consequently rely on network partners he/she already knows and trusts in, rather than bringing newcomers into the project. Lump sums can, however, be attractive for mono-beneficiaries when the amount of funding is relatively low (e.g. PoC). Ideally **consortia, when applying for a project, should be able to choose between lump sum and actual cost-based funding.**

8. Digital transformation/Partnerships/Synergies

The Funding & Tenders Portal is a user-friendly instrument. In order to increase the attractiveness of and to facilitate access to **other EU funding programmes** the Leibniz Association recommends to **integrate them into the Funding & Tenders Portal**. This should include European Partnerships, e.g. Article 185 initiatives, COST, Eurostar, ERA-Nets. **EU programmes** that are **accessible via the Funding & Tenders Portal** should, to the greatest possible extent, **be subject to the same set of rules and the Modal Grant Agreement.**

The Leibniz Association

The Leibniz Association connects 95 independent research institutions that range in focus from natural, engineering and environmental sciences to economics, spatial and social sciences and the humanities. Leibniz Institutes address issues of social, economic and ecological relevance.

They conduct basic and applied research, including in the interdisciplinary Leibniz Research Alliances, maintain scientific infrastructure, and provide research-based services. The Leibniz Association identifies focus areas for knowledge transfer, particularly with the Leibniz research museums. It advises and informs policymakers, science, industry and the general public.

Leibniz institutions collaborate intensively with universities – including in the form of Leibniz ScienceCampi – as well as with industry and other partners at home and abroad. They are subject to a transparent, independent evaluation procedure. Because of their importance for the country as a whole, the Leibniz Association Institutes are funded jointly by Germany's central and regional governments. The Leibniz Institutes employ around 20,000 people, including 10,000 researchers. The total budget for all the institutes is approximately 2.1 billion euros.

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Contact Leibniz Europe Office:

Claudia Labisch,
Head of Office
labisch@leibniz-gemeinschaft.de