

Devil in the detail



**Amelia Andersdotter
MEP**

Support for SMEs, while admirable, should not come out of the budget

THIS AUTUMN THE shape and form of the future framework programme for research funding of the European Union will be determined in the European Parliament. The discussions around the research programmes range from the amount of money allocated to research at a European level, the nature and determination of prerequisites for receiving funding, through to the fate of the subsequent research results. The framework programmes are meant to support and encourage the development of a European scientific community across all sectors. This is the eighth framework programme for research at EU level. It bears the bright name 'Horizon 2020' to reflect the ambition of the Union to advance the borders of research, knowledge and development.

The ambitions of any region in the world can very much be determined by their willingness to invest in their intellectual capital and scientific development. So what does the EU envision at the horizon of the next six years?

For me, it appears to be something akin to a disc. Member States are reluctant to devote resources to common projects and the overall impression becomes a future strategy of reaching an edge, rather than advancing into new, unchartered but potentially prosperous territory. The budget cuts proposed will largely

affect common resources, such as research, while the financial instruments available directly to Member State governments remain untouched. Additionally, the research budget has been proposed to cover a much larger range of activities than before.

The possibility of including financial backing for SMEs is one such manoeuvre. While helping SMEs with their start-up activities may by all means be both desirable and productive, it is not research. In my view, it should not be part of the research budget as it reduces the amount of money invested in the future of Europe, and of science. Similarly, the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor has always enjoyed a privileged position as a separate budget post, but will potentially be allowed to start swallowing large chunks of the research budget.

The Parliament has been hesitant about the extent to which it shall endorse open access. On the one hand, the scientific community loves open access: the free and accessible flow of research publications and data makes their lives easier, and advancements happen faster when knowledge is available. From this perspective, most innovative industries also happily accept the idea of pooling the strengths and wisdom facilitated particularly through base-level research. However, anyone who recalls when the Commission evaluated the Database Directive in 2006 will remember that the publishing industry at that time managed to keep a degree of protection, which everyone agreed was unnecessary and even harmful. The opposition towards open access, even if in defiance of all common sense, should therefore not be underestimated.

The EU is facing many challenges in the coming years, but even so there are deeply engrained traditions of producing knowledge, research and development. Many framework programmes have already contributed to the shaping of a European community of researchers, and Horizon 2020 must be financially and administratively equipped to continue this process. An open and freely accessible flow of information from EU-sponsored research activities will enhance both social and economic cohesion. I therefore strongly support – along with many other people, entities and even Member States – a large and common research budget, the results of which are made as accessible as possible, to as many as possible.

Amelia Andersdotter was voted in as a Swedish MEP in 2009. She sits on the Parliamentary Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE).

As with the advent of any new major funding mechanism, the forthcoming Horizon 2020 framework programme will be scrutinised by a wide range of stakeholders. Unique to this issue, we juxtapose the views of two notables from the policy-making and research spheres. One of the brightest and youngest political minds in Europe, **Amelia Andersdotter MEP**, and policy expert, **Damir Marinovic**, reveal their expectations and points of interest for the new instrument

HORIZON 2020 WILL support research and innovation activities, and in this context, the definition of innovation is wider than just commercial introduction of a new or significantly improved product or service. The concept was expanded to emphasise the new dimension of innovation: social innovation as a non-commercial paradigm which, for example, improves public services or addresses social needs.

In order to strengthen European innovation, Horizon 2020 will increase support for the testing, piloting, and demonstration of new technologies. The new programme will also strengthen market demand for innovation through the development of new standards by supporting public bodies to procure R&D services or innovative products and services, and introducing inducement prizes that reward the innovation achievements. Furthermore, in order to increase Europe's research talents, better exploit creativity and promote solutions, topic descriptions for calls will be less prescriptive.

With a budget increase from €1.7 billion to €2.8 billion for European Research Infrastructures (RIs), Horizon 2020 will bring opportunities to support the development of new world-class RIs, integrate and open existing national RIs of pan-European interest and support the development of e-Infrastructures, such as the European Grid Infrastructure. In addition, the overall goal is to foster the innovation potential of research by investing in infrastructures and their human capital, reinforcing European policies for RIs and facilitating strategic international cooperation. Horizon 2020 will support the riskier ICT research and innovation that can deliver new business breakthroughs and business opportunities for European companies. Promoting the innovation potential of RIs in Horizon 2020 activities will generate the scientific and technological breakthroughs required to develop the innovative products, services and processes. This will better equip us in tackling the urgent challenges society faces.

One of the larger and most eagerly anticipated facets of Horizon 2020 is the increased role of SMEs in filling in the gaps in funding for early-stage, high-risk research and innovation. Around 15 per cent (€6.8 billion) of the budget of the 'Tackling Societal challenges' and the 'Leadership in enabling and industrial technologies' programmes will be allocated to SMEs. A new dedicated SME instrument will provide an easily accessible funding for SMEs, with simple rules and procedures (eg. open calls) and a short time-to-grant corresponding to the short innovation cycles of smaller companies. The new instrument will encourage a bottom-up approach from SMEs to put forward

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European Grid Infrastructure

Innovation must receive a boost; SMEs can offer added value



their most innovative ideas with an EU added value. Adequate SME involvement in Horizon 2020 should be mainly ensured through dedicated actions corresponding to SME needs, comprising all forms of innovation and covering the whole innovation cycle, from idea to market.

e-Infrastructures are now an essential foundation for research and innovation. Horizon 2020 can provide the means to accelerate the move towards an e-Infrastructure that is able to flexibly and responsively meet the needs of diverse user communities. e-Infrastructures will provide an open platform for innovation that will help European researchers to harness the data deluge and derive the knowledge they need to provide answers to the societal challenges facing Europe, both now and in the future. It will also serve as a key enabler of the successful implementation of Horizon 2020.

Damir Marinovic holds an MSc in Public Management and Policy from the University of Twente and an MA in International Affairs from the University of Belgrade. He has been providing strategy and policy expertise for a number of international projects and organisations and is currently working for EGI.eu as a Strategy and Policy Officer.