The general objective of Horizon 2020 is to build a society and a world-leading economy based on knowledge and innovation across the whole Union, while contributing to sustainable development. It will support the Europe 2020 strategy and other Union policies as well as the achievement and functioning of the European Research Area (ERA).

The performance indicators for assessing progress against this general objective are:
- the research and development (R&D) target (3 % of GDP) of the Europe 2020 strategy;
- the innovation output indicator in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy;
- the share of researchers in the active population.

This general objective shall be pursued through three distinct, yet mutually reinforcing, priorities, each containing a set of specific objectives. They will be implemented in a seamless manner in order to foster interactions between the different specific objectives, avoid any duplication of effort and reinforce their combined impact.

The Joint Research Centre (JRC) shall contribute to the general objective and priorities of Horizon 2020 with the specific objective of providing customer-driven scientific and technical support to Union policies. (See also H2020-EU.6.)

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) shall contribute to the
general objective and priorities of Horizon 2020 with the specific objective of integrating the knowledge triangle of higher education, research and innovation. The indicators for assessing the performance of the EIT are:

- organisations from universities, business and research integrated in the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs);
- collaboration inside the knowledge triangle leading to the development of innovative products, services and processes.
(See also H2020-EU.7.) (http://cordis.europa.eu/programme/rcn/664513_en.html)

Cross-cutting issues and support measures in Horizon 2020

Cross-cutting issues, an indicative list of which is found in Article 14, will be promoted between specific objectives of the three priorities as necessary to develop new knowledge, key competences and major technological breakthroughs as well as translating knowledge into economic and societal value. Furthermore, in many cases, interdisciplinary solutions will have to be developed which cut across the multiple specific objectives of Horizon 2020. Horizon 2020 will provide incentives for actions dealing with such cross-cutting issues, including by the efficient bundling of budgets.

Social sciences and humanities

Social sciences and humanities research will be fully integrated into each of the priorities of Horizon 2020 and each of the specific objectives and will contribute to the evidence base for policy making at international, Union, national, regional and local level. In relation to societal challenges, social sciences and humanities will be mainstreamed as an essential element of the activities needed to tackle each of the societal challenges to enhance their impact. The specific objective of the societal challenge 'Europe in a changing world - Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies' (H2020-EU.3.6.) (http://cordis.europa.eu/programme/rcn/664435_en.html) will support social sciences and humanities research by focusing on inclusive, innovative and reflective societies.

Science and society

The relationship between science and society as well as the promotion of responsible research and innovation, science education and culture shall be deepened and public confidence in science reinforced by activities of Horizon 2020 favouring the informed engagement of citizens and civil society in research and innovation.
Gender

Promoting gender equality in science and innovation is a commitment of the Union. In Horizon 2020, gender will be addressed as a cross-cutting issue in order to rectify imbalances between women and men, and to integrate a gender dimension in research and innovation programming and content.

SMEs

Horizon 2020 will encourage and support the participation of SMEs in an integrated way across all specific objectives. In accordance with Article 22, measures set out under the specific objective 'Innovation in SMEs' (dedicated SME instrument) (H2020-EU.2.3.) http://cordis.europa.eu/programme/rcn/664223_en.html shall be applied in the specific objective 'Leadership in enabling and industrial technologies' (H2020-EU.2.1.) http://cordis.europa.eu/programme/rcn/664145_en.html and in the priority 'Societal challenges' (H2020-EU.3.) http://cordis.europa.eu/programme/rcn/664235_en.html.

Fast Track to Innovation (FTI)

FTI, as set out in Article 24, will support innovation actions under the specific objective "Leadership in enabling and industrial technologies" and under the priority 'Societal challenges', with a bottom-up-driven logic on the basis of a continuously open call, and with 'time to grant' not exceeding six months.

Widening participation

The research and innovation potential of the Member States, despite some recent convergence, remains very different, with large gaps between "innovation leaders" and "modest innovators". Activities shall help close the research and innovation divide in Europe by promoting synergies with the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) and also by specific measures to unlock excellence in low performing research, development and innovation (RDI) regions, thereby widening participation in Horizon 2020 and contributing to the realisation of the ERA.
International Cooperation

International cooperation with third countries and international, regional or global organisations is necessary to effectively address many specific objectives set out in Horizon 2020. International cooperation is essential for frontier and basic research in order to reap the benefits from emerging science and technology opportunities. Cooperation is necessary for addressing societal challenges and enhancing the competitiveness of European industry. Promoting R&I staff mobility at an international level is also crucial to enhance this global cooperation. International cooperation in research and innovation is a key aspect of the Union’s global commitments. International cooperation will, therefore, be promoted in each of the three priorities of Horizon 2020. In addition, dedicated horizontal activities will be supported in order to ensure the coherent and effective development of international cooperation across Horizon 2020.

Sustainable development and climate change

Horizon 2020 will encourage and support activities towards exploiting Europe’s leadership in the race to develop new processes and technologies promoting sustainable development, in a broad sense, and combating climate change. Such a horizontal approach, fully integrated in all Horizon 2020 priorities, will help the Union to prosper in a low-carbon, resource-constrained world while building a resource-efficient, sustainable and competitive economy.

Bridging from discovery to market application

Bridging actions throughout Horizon 2020 are aimed at bringing discovery to market application, leading to exploitation and commercialisation of ideas whenever appropriate. The actions should be based on a broad innovation concept and stimulate cross-sectoral innovation.

Cross-cutting support measures

The cross-cutting issues will be supported by a number of horizontal support measures, including support to: enhancing the attractiveness of the research profession, including the general principles of the European Charter for Researchers;
strengthening the evidence base and the development of and support for ERA (including the five ERA initiatives) and the Innovation Union; improving framework conditions in support of the Innovation Union, including the principles of the Commission Recommendation on the management of intellectual property and exploring the possibility of setting up an European Intellectual Property Rights valorisation instrument; administration and coordination of international networks for excellent researchers and innovators, such as COST.

Context

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