UKRO Horizon 2020 Condensed

What is ‘International co-operation across Horizon 2020’?

International co-operation in research and innovation is important to strengthen European academia and industry, as well as to help better address global societal challenges and support the EU’s external policies. In the context of Horizon 2020, international co-operation refers to collaboration with any legal entity based in the so-called ‘third countries’ that are neither EU Member States nor Associated Countries. This includes new global players, such as the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) or established global leaders, like the USA, Canada, Japan and Australia.

There is no specific programme dedicated to international co-operation within Horizon 2020, unlike in FP7 with its International Co-operation theme under the Capacities Programme. Instead, collaborative projects involving international partners are encouraged across the whole of Horizon 2020. Multi-annual roadmaps for co-operation were developed for key partner countries, such as the EFTA countries, EU enlargement countries, European Neighbourhood Policy countries, industrialised economies, emerging economies and developing countries.

What can be funded?

International co-operation is supported by Pillar 1 of Horizon 2020, more specifically by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the European Research Council and Research Infrastructures, and focus on researcher-driven activities that are open to researchers from third countries. A second area targets international co-operation activities through all seven societal challenges (Pillar 3) and the enabling and industrial technologies challenge (Pillar 2), such as ICT, Space and the Key Enabling Technologies (KETs). There are also cross-cutting international co-operation activities, such as supporting policy dialogue in research and innovation with international partners, which are supported by Societal Challenge 6 on Europe in a changing world – inclusive, innovative and reflective Societies.

Other areas of Horizon 2020 that support international co-operation are EURATOM and COST.

Funding, eligibility and project details

The funding instruments for supporting international co-operation include research and innovation projects (collaborative projects with international partners), networking activities, and joint initiatives with international partners, such as coordinated calls and joint calls.

Any legal entity based in a third country is able to participate in Horizon 2020, however unlike in FP7, only countries that have a GDP below EUR 3 trillion are eligible to receive automatic funding. Only countries mentioned in Annex A to the Horizon 2020 Work Programme are automatically eligible for EU funding. This threshold effectively excludes the BRIC countries from automatically receiving EU funding, although South Africa, for instance, is still eligible to automatically receive it. Funding for participants from countries above the threshold may be possible in exceptional cases and where their participation is essential for the success of the project due to the exceptional expertise that they can provide.
Call timings

Topics across the Horizon 2020 Work Programme include opportunities for international co-operation, in particular the Societal Challenges. The first calls under Horizon 2020 were launched on 11 December 2013. Not necessarily all calls for all areas were launched on this date, and as work programmes cover 2014 and 2015, certain calls were launched in 2014, or will be launched later in 2015.

Relevant EU policy areas and developments

The European Commission’s Communication on ‘Enhancing and focusing EU international co-operation in research and innovation, a strategic approach’ states that a “dual approach” to international co-operation occur in Horizon 2020. The Commission is keen to promote the importance of jointly addressing global challenges, but also in making Europe more attractive as a location for research and innovation, as well as boosting industrial competitiveness. In this context, the Strategy recommends increasing co-operation on EU strategic priorities while still allowing third countries (neither EU nor Associated Countries) to participate in EU research where this is of mutual benefit.

In September 2014, the Commission published several Roadmaps for International Cooperation in Research and Innovation with its major international partners, including, South Africa, the USA, Brazil, India, South Korea and many more. These Roadmaps identify the priority areas for mutually beneficial cooperation, which will be reflected in the next Work Programmes.

More information:

- European Commission’s International Co-operation website: ec.europa.eu/research/iscp
- European Commission’s Third Country Roadmaps and Communication on ‘Enhancing and focusing on EU international cooperation in research and innovation: A strategic approach’: ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm?pg=strategy
- European Commission’s Research and Innovation Participant Portal for:
  - Calls for proposals ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities
  - Work programme ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/funding/reference_docs.html#h2020-work-programmes
- Sign up to the UKRO Portal to stay up to date on Horizon 2020 general developments, calls, events and results: ukro.ac.uk
- For specific questions, contact your UKRO European Advisor.