

Valuing engagement in EU research

The Health Research Board (HRB) recognises, values, and supports engagement in EU-funded research as a fundamental tool to increase the impact research has on society and the economy.

Enhanced participation is a strategic priority for Ireland under the EU Horizon 2020 Framework Programme, the main EU funding programme for research and development for the period 2014 to 2020, with a €78.6 billion budget.^{1 2} Horizon 2020 provides Ireland's research institutions, public sector, SMEs, charities and multinationals with significant opportunities to secure funding to support their research activities, consolidate critical mass in key areas of national priority, build on and foster collaboration with other public and private sectors, access shared key infrastructure within the EU, and enhance their international reputation and leadership position in strategic areas.

As the lead Irish agency with a health research remit the HRB is fully engaged in achieving the ambitious national H2020 target of €1.25bn, which exceeds the 'juste retour' figure. It hosts the National Delegate role and one of two National Contact Point roles for H2020 Health. In doing so the HRB is working to identify strategic opportunities for engagement of the Irish health research community, influence work programmes as they evolve, raise awareness and disseminate information about H2020 nationally and provide hands on support and advice to applicants. Health researchers in Ireland continue to perform above average success rates for EU Member States.³

Collaboration, excellence and long-term impact remain cornerstones of EU funding programmes. The HRB is keen to ensure that Irish health researchers are exposed to the significant opportunities presented within the core Societal Challenge *Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing*, within wider interdisciplinary partnerships and within cross-thematic joint funding initiatives.

The HRB remains open to considering new EU co-funding partnerships, both for facilitating engagement of Irish health researchers at EU level and for HRB engagement in its own right. An implementation structure, process and budget for engagement in EU Public-to-Public partnerships has been developed that is fully integrated into the systems and procedures of the HRB

Instruments and Opportunities

The European research landscape is complex. A new strategic programming approach to H2020 is seeking to synergise and integrate agendas across the myriad of EU funding initiatives, and includes an expanded set of instruments for EU Commission-led funding and co-funding of research and innovation (See **Appendix 1**). In addition the Member States-led Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) are currently maturing and continue to offer opportunities to researchers for developing and participating in joint research at EU level.

¹ EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) Ireland's Strategy and Target for Participation. <http://www.djei.ie/science/technology/strategypaper.pdf>

² Horizon 2020: Northern Ireland Action Plan 2013 http://www.detini.gov.uk/horizon_2020_action_plan_2013_branded_v7.pdf

³ HRB Board paper. May 2016. Results of first 2 years (2014 and 2015 calls) of Horizon 2020 funding programme in health.

The HRB believes that participating in Public to Public partnerships is a valuable way for the research community to engage and collaborate with their European counterparts. The core opportunities for HRB are centred on the following main instruments:

- **Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs)** that aim to pool national research efforts to make better use of Europe's limited public research and development resources and tackle common European challenges more effectively. Participating countries agree, on a voluntary basis and in a partnership approach, on common strategic research agendas (SRA), to be implemented jointly.⁴
- **ERA-NET Cofund** networks of public research organisations that coordinate joint research activities in research areas which are of significant strategic value and relevance to the EU. ERA-Nets are initiated by ERA-Net calls in the Horizon 2020 work programme to which consortia of research funding agencies (ERA-Net consortia) submit ERA-Net proposals. If approved by the Commission, the ERA-Net consortium forms an ERA-Net which runs joint transnational calls and other transnational activities. The first joint call run by an ERA-Net is 33% co-funded by the European Commission.⁵

ERA-NET CoFund can be also used to financially support the preparation, establishment, design and implementation of JPI partnerships but the JPI operating costs must still come from the participating Member States.

- **Coordination and Support Actions (CSAs)** multi-partner EU projects that provide funding for activities coordinating or supporting research actions and strategies, such as policy dialogue, networking and exchange actions, awareness-raising and communication, dissemination, mutual learning, cross-border access to research infrastructure. CSAs do not fund research.

CSAs can also be used to ensure the operability and functionality of the JPI partnerships, e.g. by project management, supporting the governance structures in their respective tasks, development of rules and guidelines to measure and assess the impact of the JPI or by communication and dissemination activities.

- The **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) CoFund** scheme that aims to cofund new or existing regional, national or international programmes operating in Europe to open up to, and provide for, international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary research training, as well as transnational and cross-sectoral mobility of researchers at all stages of their career.

Operationalising the HRB agenda

The HRB has established an internal HRB EU Strategy group structure to consider new Horizon 2020 partnerships and to provide recommendations for HRB Executive Team decision on HRB engagement.

Any HRB decision will address level of engagement, budget and resourcing issues including:

- Expression of Interest from the research community outlining justification for engagement, added value for Ireland and the benefits of Irish engagement for EU/ other Member States;
- Overview of existing national funding commitments/ research strengths in the area of interest;
- Irish National Delegate insight on discussions at the EU H2020 Health Programme Committee;

⁴ There are four main health-relevant Joint Programming Initiatives. The HRB, in partnership with other national agencies is actively involved in the [JPI Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life](#) and [JPI for Neurodegenerative Diseases \(JPND\)](#). The HRB has a watching brief on [JPI More Years Better Lives \(MYBL\)](#) and is currently reviewing opportunities within the [JPI AntiMicrobial Resistance \(AMR\)](#).

⁵ Ireland does not have a strong traditional of engagement in health-related ERA-NETS. In January 2015 Science Foundation Ireland was a partner in ERA-Net [ERACoSysMed](#) on Systems Medicine.

- Relevance to the HRB (i.e. whether the HRB is the most appropriate Irish participant for the initiative);
- Potential to leverage resources or work in partnership with others relevant Irish Agencies and Departments;
- Internal or external capacity (human resources with specific expertise and finances) to engage in the activity.

Membership of this group includes the HRB CEO, Research Strategy and Funding Director, Business Leads within the HRB Funding Directorate, and HRB EU Team (National Delegate and National Contact Points for H2020 Health).

Budget and Resourcing

In reviewing current EU engagement within the HRB and in other Irish Departments/Agencies it is clear that there is currently no 'one size fits all' model for determining the level of engagement or managing resourcing commitments.

The provision of funding for engaging in individual initiatives will first be considered as the equivalent to that of an individual project grant i.e. €100k p.a. for 3 years. While the cofunding aspect under ERA-NETs will be useful in 'scaling-up' available HRB budget allocations it will not be used as the definitive characteristic in deciding on engagement.

Resourcing will be determined on a case-by-case basis. The HRB will adopt a pragmatic, cascading approach in deciding on resourcing levels that considers the nature of the partnership, how deep it integrates into core HRB strategic objectives, capacity in-house to deliver and the use of external leaders who would be willing to become engaged with HRB oversight.

Appendix 1: EU Horizon 2020 Instruments

Table A1.1 Funding instruments utilised by EU Horizon 2020

Types of Action ⁶	Code	Minimum conditions ⁷	Funding rate	Typical duration	Average EC contribution	Aim
Research and Innovation Action	RIA	≥ 3 legal entities from 3 MS/ AC	100%	36-48 months	€2.0-€5.0m	Collaborative research projects
Innovation Action	IA	≥ 3 legal entities from 3 MS/ AC	70%	30-26 months	€2.0-€5.0m	Produce plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services
Coordination and Support Action	CSA	1 legal entity	100%	12-30 months	€0.5m-2.0m	Accompanying measures (standardisation, dissemination, policy dialogues etc.). No research
ERC Grants	ERC	1 legal entity in MS/ AC	100%	60months	Starting: ≤€2.0m Consolidator: ≤2.75m Advanced: ≤3.5m	Support excellent investigators and their research teams to pursue ground-breaking, high-gain/ high risk research
Prizes	PRI	1 legal entity	n/a	n/a	Variable; see topic	Recognise past achievements Induce future activities
SME Instrument	SME	1 SME in MS/ AC	3 phases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: lump sum of € 50K / project • Phase 2: € 1 – 2.5M / project (1-2 years) (70%-100% of eligible costs reimbursed) • Phase 3 : no funding 			Combination of demonstration activities (testing, prototyping,....), market replication
Fast Track to Innovation	FTI	≤5 legal entities from MS/ AC	70%	?	≤€3.0m	Produce plans and arrangement or designs for new, altered or improved products, process or services
MSCA CoFund⁸	MSCA CoFund	1 legal entity	50%	36-60 months	≤€10.0m	Co-funding of regional, national and international doctoral and fellowship programmes
ERA-NETs	ERA-NET CoFund	≥ 3 legal entities in MS/ AC	33%	60 months	Variable; see topic	Coordinate research efforts of participating MS/ AC in the field described and implement joint transnational call for proposals with EU cofunding

⁶Defined in the Work Programme

⁷Additional conditions may be listed in the respective Work Programmes

⁸ MSCA = Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions

Types of Action ⁶	Code	Minimum conditions ⁷	Funding rate	Typical duration	Average EC contribution	Aim
Pre-commercial Procurement	CoFund-PCP	≥3 public procurers from MS/ AC	70%	18-48 months for 2 Phases: Preparation and Execution	Variable; see topic	Enable the public sector as a technologically demanding buyer to encourage research, development and validation of breakthrough solutions in public interest
Public Procurement of Innovative Solutions	CoFund-PPI	≥3 public procurers from MS/ AC	20% (40% Health)	18-48 months for 2 Phases: Preparation and Execution	Variable; see topic	Enable trans-national buyer groups of procurers to share the risks of acting as early adopters of innovative goods or services which are not yet available on a large scale commercial basis
COFUND European Joint Programme	CoFund-EJP	≥ 5 legal entities from 3 MS/ AC	≤ 70%	60 months	≤ €50m	New in WP 2016/17. Create an EU joint programme for monitoring and scientific assessment of human exposures to chemicals and potential health impacts in EU, building on previous activities at EU and national levels
InnovFin Infectious Diseases Financial Instrument	InnovFin ID	Loans to SMEs, midcaps, special project vehicles, research institutions and other legal entities for the purpose of corporate or project finance Loans to large pharmaceutical companies for financing the development of pre-identified medical products on a risk sharing basis	loans	3 year pilot instrument	Loans of €7.5m-€75m	Finance pre-commercial stage investments in the field of ID i.e. the project produces innovative vaccines, drugs, medical and diagnostic devices or novel research infrastructure for combatting infectious diseases.