Fact sheet: Science with and for Society in Horizon 2020

Objective

Horizon 2020 reflects Europe's commitment to finding answers to key societal challenges. Doing so effectively implies a close partnership between science and society, with both sides working together towards common goals. Broader engagement of the public with science and innovation will lead to greater public confidence to invest in ground-breaking research. Furthermore, if Europe is to maintain its place in a global knowledge economy, science education and scientific careers must be promoted, and gender barriers addressed, so that we can recruit and maintain new talent. Equally, scientists must invest in society and Europe's ideals, pairing scientific excellence with social awareness and responsibility.

Policy context

The strength of the European science and technology system depends on its capacity to harness talent and ideas from wherever they exist. This can only be achieved if a fruitful and rich dialogue and active cooperation between science and society is developed to ensure a more responsible science and to enable the development of policies more relevant to citizens. The relationship between science and society is affected by technological changes in research and innovation. Therefore, it is crucial to improve the cooperation between science and society to enable a widening of the social and political support to science and to technology in all Member States.

'Science with and for Society' will be instrumental in addressing the European societal challenges tackled by Horizon 2020, building capacities and developing innovative ways of connecting science to society. It will make science more attractive, raise the appetite of society for innovation, and open up research and innovation activities; allowing all societal actors to work together during the whole research and innovation process in order to better align both the process and its outcomes with the values, needs and expectations of European society. This approach is called Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) and is mainstreamed throughout Horizon 2020.

How much funding is allocated to this area?

€462 million

How will it be implemented?

The specific activities for 'Science with and for Society' are the following:

(a) Making scientific and technological careers attractive to young students, and foster sustainable interaction between schools, research institutions, industry and civil society organisations;

(b) Promoting gender equality in particular by supporting structural changes in the organisation of research institutions and in the content and design of research activities;

(c) Integrating society in science and innovation issues, policies and activities in order to integrate citizens' interests and values and to increase the quality, relevance, social acceptability and sustainability of research and innovation outcomes in various fields of activity, from social innovation to areas such as biotechnology and nanotechnology;

(d) Encouraging citizens to engage in science through formal and informal science education, and promote the diffusion of science-based activities, namely in science centres and other appropriate channels;

(e) Increasing the accessibility and the use of the results of publicly-funded research;

(f) Developing the governance to advance responsible research and innovation by all stakeholders (researchers, public authorities, industry and civil society organisations), sensitive to society needs and demands; promote an ethics framework for research and innovation;

(g) Taking due and proportional precautions in research and innovation activities by anticipating and assessing potential environmental, health and safety impacts;

(h) Improving knowledge on science communication in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of interactions between scientists, general media and the public.

Science with and for Society will have its own Work Programme comprising of calls, grants to identified beneficiaries, expert groups and public procurements grouped together under 'other actions' to further develop, disseminate and support good RRI practices all across Europe.

In addition, because Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is a cross-cutting action that will be implemented throughout Horizon 2020, 0.5% of the budgets for the 'Societal Challenges' and 'Industrial Leadership' pillars of Horizon 2020 will be earmarked for RRI/Science with and for Society actions. This means in practice that other Work Programmes in Horizon 2020 will include actions relating to public engagement, gender equality, science education, ethics and Open Access.