Horizon 2020:
Sustaining Excellence in University Research & Innovation

December 2013

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Opening Statement: Enhancing the performance of Irish Universities in Horizon 2020©

The Irish universities have been the most successful Irish performers in FP7, in no small part due to the strong collaborations they have developed with the private sector. Maintaining and improving on this performance in Horizon 2020 will be challenging, as the top research organisations from around Europe will increasingly look to Horizon 2020 to support their activities while their national funding levels decrease as a result of the global financial crisis. The universities are confident that the recommendations outlined in this document will give the sector the best chance of success in Horizon 2020. We will robustly implement the recommendations below that are directed towards ourselves and will put in place mechanisms to monitor progress, shifting resources and focus where necessary. We are aware that the universities are competing with each other for research funding, but as a whole we are convinced that maximum benefits for the sector will only result if each university is equipped with the right "tools", internally and externally, to compete to the best of their ability and individual strengths. The universities look forward to working with the National Support Network, national funding agencies and government to maximise success for Ireland in Horizon 2020. In this regard we will:

- Foster and promote cross-institutional harnessing of research and innovation expertise to facilitate greater competitiveness;

- Establish a partnership with industry representative associations (IBEC, ISME etc.) to seek out collaborations with the private sector in order to maximise the return from the "Industrial Leadership" Pillar and all areas of Horizon 2020;

- Work to maximise commercialisation opportunities arising from Horizon 2020 projects using the national technology transfer infrastructure, which has been strengthened by the establishment of the Central Technology Transfer Office;

- Work in partnership with universities and companies in Northern Ireland, InterTradeIreland and InvestNI to develop more collaborative ventures for Horizon 2020;

- Develop targeted Horizon 2020/EU funding strategies for large-scale centres;

- Attract excellent people for European Research Council (ERC) funding, target those with high potential already here and nurture them to develop successful ERC applications. Analyse the numbers and quality of applications which have not been funded to encourage reapplication from high scoring but not funded candidates;

- Provide institutional-level incentives to attract and retain ERC award holders;

- Target COFUND under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – a major opportunity for co-financing Structured Doctoral Programmes and Postdoctoral Fellowship positions;

- Encourage university staff to put themselves forward as Experts (to evaluate for Horizon 2020 funding Calls and participate in Horizon 2020 Advisory Groups), and to engage with significant groupings that influence programme content, such as Technology Platforms;

- Set-up a policy and strategy working group as a sub-group of the IUA Research Officers Group to assist the Vice Presidents/Deans of Research in implementing their Horizon 2020 strategy.

Context

The Irish universities, working together under the auspices of the Irish Universities Association (IUA)[1] have reviewed the European Commission's proposals for Horizon 2020 - The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014 to 2020)[2] and have followed the debate of these proposals in the European Parliament and Council.

Overall, we welcome the proposals for Horizon 2020 and look forward to the official release of the finalised documents in late 2013. The three "pillars" of the Horizon 2020 programme represent significant opportunities for the universities to secure funding to support their research activities, consolidate critical mass in key areas of national priority, build on and foster collaborations with other sectors, and enhance their international reputation and leadership position in strategic areas.

For the Irish universities, research is a core activity along with teaching & learning and innovation. The universities recognise and welcome the commitment by government to funding research as a component in its drive for economic recovery. The Horizon 2020 programme presents a major opportunity for academics and researchers to leverage national funding, collaborate nationally and internationally, and work with the private and other sectors.

Ireland has been very successful in securing funding from the *Seventh Framework Programme* (FP7). With a total draw-down of €571 million to-date,[3] and an application success rate of 22%, the performance of Irish organisations in FP7 has been strong.

Beneficiaries of the funding include public and private sector organisations, ranging from small spin-out companies to large multi-nationals and cooperation between all sectors has been significantly improved as a result of their participation. Within this overall collaborative framework, higher education wins the largest share of FP7 funding (62%), in no small part due to the strong collaborations it has developed with the private sector, both in Ireland and the wider Europe.

The challenge explored in this paper is how policy and associated actions can best support a further enhancement of Ireland's performance overall under Horizon 2020.

In this paper we suggest a number of areas where Ireland can influence the evolution and implementation of Horizon 2020. We also make recommendations and proposals on how both government and our universities can optimise our involvement in the programme and its impact on economic and social development.

We begin by looking at the three pillars of Horizon 2020.

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1) The Irish Universities Association is the representative body of the Heads of the seven Irish universities. Through consultation and collaborative projects the IUA develops strategy and policy to advance third and fourth level education and research, with a shared aim to maximise the universities' contribution to Ireland's social, cultural and economic well-being.

2) European Commission COM (2011) 809-811.

3) Tenth Interim Report of Irish Involvement in the Seventh European Union Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) - Enterprise Ireland, September 2013.

Pillar 1 – Excellent Science

European Research Council

As the main performers of basic research in Ireland, we particularly welcome the increase of the budget for the European Research Council (ERC), underlining as it does Europe's commitment to scientific excellence. However, it is vital that the scope of scientific endeavour supported by the ERC is not arbitrarily limited. If Europe is to prosper in the long term, it needs to fully support basic and frontier research as well as more applied forms.

In addition, we strongly encourage the ERC to continue the system of evaluating proposals in discipline-specific panels. This will be of particular importance in ensuring prominence of the Social Sciences and Humanities.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

We welcome the recent confirmation that 8% of the overall Horizon 2020 budget (approximately €6.1 billion) has been allocated to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) in Horizon 2020:[4] a small increase in the original percentage allocation proposed by the Commission. The value of this increase is magnified in light of the fact that the final Horizon 2020 budget has been cut by almost 12.5% compared to that originally proposed.

However, we would appreciate seeing more innovation, in its broadest sense, incorporated into the MSCA. Industry involvement in training and life-long learning is well suited to some areas of study. However, there is also an opportunity to expand opportunities for partnership with other governmental and non-governmental organisations.

We make the following recommendations for the further enhancement of the MSCA:

- Provision of funding for four year PhDs (as opposed to the current three);

- Continuation of funding to support the integration of researchers into a more stable European research career such as that offered by the Career Integration Grants under FP7.

- More focused professional development training including, for example, entrepreneurship and innovation training.

- Mandatory student placements in other sectors during doctoral training[5].

- Finally, the MSCA should ensure that mechanisms to support researchers returning from a career break are incorporated into all Actions.

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4) http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/intm/138118.pdf

5) As described in the Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/pdf/research_policies/Principles_for_ Innovative_Doctoral_Training.pdf

Research Infrastructures

We support the proposal to open up all key national Research Infrastructures to all European researchers. To ensure success of this initiative funding needs to be made available for researchers outside of the countries which host the key national infrastructures. From the perspective of the universities, distributed and virtual infrastructures will be a key route to ensure our participation in Research Infrastructures, and we would strongly recommend that support for these be prioritised in addition to the traditional single-site Research Infrastructures.

Pillar 2 – Industrial Leadership

We particularly welcome the topics proposed under this pillar in: "Leadership and Enabling Technologies". There are clear synergies between these topics and research strengths of our universities. This, combined with the strong collaborative relationships which exist between our universities and enterprise, put us in a strong position to participate in many of the instruments proposed for this pillar.

There is still a need, as the Work Programme is developed, to ensure that its detailed measures fully support this collaboration and these measures need effective communication. This will assist us in determining how we can best leverage our relationships with enterprise, and encourage the spin-out of university research to ensure successful participation in this Pillar.

In addition we are very supportive of the instruments in this Pillar designed to increase the research and innovation capacity of SMEs, which has the potential for providing new opportunities for the universities to partner with them.

Pillar 3 – Societal Challenges

We welcome the establishment of the Societal Challenges pillar and the inclusion of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) throughout, particularly. These disciplines need to remain a core part of each of these challenges. We also welcome the splitting the sixth challenge "Inclusive, Innovative and Secure Societies" into two separate challenges to include one exclusively dedicated to "Europe in a changing world – Inclusive, Innovative and Reflective societies", highlighting further the importance of SSH. We also stress that opportunities for SSH researchers should not be limited to the Societal Challenges pillar.

Finally, as the Work Programme is developed in the coming months, clarity as to how the Calls for Proposals in this Pillar will incorporate Horizon 2020's stronger focus on "innovation", and the functioning of the proposed linkages with European Innovation Partnerships would be very welcome.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) was formed during the period of FP7, although separate to FP7 itself. The EIT has now been incorporated into Horizon 2020. In its initial phase, the EIT has launched three KICs – Knowledge and Innovation Communities. The participation in these KICS has been confined to a relatively small number of Member States.

Given that the Horizon 2020 proposals envisage a significant increase in the budget for the EIT, it is essential that clear and transparent mechanisms are put in place to allow a broader participation in the KICs and other EIT instruments.

Horizontal Issues

Simplification

We welcome the Commission's commitment to "simplification". To ensure that the laudable aim of simplification is achieved in practice, we make the following recommendations:

- The ability to recover identifiable taxes such as VAT (value-added tax), whilst welcome, should not unnecessarily complicate financial reporting for beneficiaries.

- The revised comitology of four Programme Committees (one per Pillar plus a Horizontal Configuration) will still make it challenging for Member States to provide effective input into the Work Programmes for Horizon 2020. We welcome the opportunity to nominate alternate National Delegates for each Committee, particularly in the Excellent Science and Societal Challenges Pillars, where it would be challenging for one National Delegate to effectively contribute to the discussion on the diverse range of research areas and programmes in these Pillars.

- We welcome the expansion of the Guarantee Fund to all actions, and we strongly recommend that the fund be further extended to cover the cost of any mediation or arbitration costs that may arise in the course of Horizon 2020-funded activities.

- The opportunity to secure management costs for the higher education sector across the board in Horizon 2020 should be given priority. This will increase efficiencies in the sector for the overall benefit of the country and is essential given the current difficult financial position nationally.

- Given the extensive (and successful) efforts to implement Full Economic Costing in the Irish Universities, the absence of an FEC option is regrettable. While this issue may be disposed of for Horizon 2020, it should continue to be pursued by government in the longer term.

- As a method to assist organisations to track their participation in Horizon 2020 Calls, we propose that a simple system be put in place to generate automated email alerts to the organisation's LEAR (Legal Entity Appointed Representative) upon submission of a proposal from that organisation to a Horizon 2020 Call. The current system where persons at an organisation can submit a proposal to FP7 without the support of their organisation is unsatisfactory, and can lead to significant problems down the line if that proposal is selected for funding.

Researcher Careers

Initiatives in the past few years have underlined the importance of researcher career development and attractive employment conditions for researchers in constructing a "knowledge economy". Our universities have been highly active in this area, for example, developing Fourth Level Ireland – University Graduate Education[6] and taking the lead in endorsing the European Commission's "Charter & Code",[7] which outlines 40 principles around open and transparent recruitment and career management for researchers.

The universities have also been early adopters of the Commissions' Institutional HR Strategy Process (HRS4R),[8] the follow-on from the "Charter and Code" endorsement. This has resulted in the awarding of the Commission's "HR Excellence in Research" logo to University College Dublin, the University of Limerick and University College Cork with awards to other Irish universities in the pipeline.

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6) http://www.4thlevelireland.ie/

7) "The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers", European Commission EUR 21620, 2005. http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/brochure

8) http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/rights/strategy4Researcher

We believe that Horizon 2020 should facilitate researchers in all sectors in developing and progressing their careers from doctoral student to senior researcher level. Thus, we strongly support the incorporation of the "Charter & Code" in the "Rules for Participation"[9] for Horizon 2020. We recommend that the "Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training"[5] be considered in all Work Programmes where Doctoral graduates are one of the outputs of the funded projects.

A key aspect of facilitating attractive research careers is to ensure that all researchers, regardless of gender, have the opportunity to access and develop a research career to the highest level within Europe. Additionally, it is clear that many areas of research benefit from a gender-enhanced approach, i.e., ensuring that differences in gender are taken into account when performing research. An example of this is the area of cardiovascular disease (CVD), where there is an acknowledgment that the manifestation of CVD in women differs from that in men should lead to more appropriate treatment of the condition in women.[10] We would like to see all Work Programmes arising from the Horizon 2020 proposal containing strong initiatives to support gender equality and gender-enhanced research and innovation.

Open Access

Our universities strongly support open access to research output and data. The Irish universities were fully behind the National Open Access policy[11] launched last October, having also developed Ireland's first open access portal (www.rian.ie) through an IUA-led Higher Education Authority Strategic Innovation Fund project in 2007. The RIAN portal has already been made compatible with the requirements for FP7 and Horizon 2020 (through the OpenAIRE[12] project).

Research Integrity

A policy on ensuring integrity in research, developed with impetus from the universities, is now being finalised. The policy has been developed via collaboration between the higher education sector, government departments and funding agencies. As a result, applicants from Ireland for Horizon 2020 calls will be able to demonstrate that there is a strong national policy in place for ensuring research integrity in the conduct of EU funded research. A stronger emphasis on research integrity (with due regard to subsidiarity) would be welcomed in Horizon 2020.

Internationalisation of Horizon 2020

The universities welcome the opening up of Horizon 2020 to facilitate more meaningful and effective collaboration with third counties, in particular the USA and BRIC[13] countries. Ireland has a worldwide collaborative network in research. However, experience with previous Framework Programmes has shown that is extremely difficult to fully involve US or other third country partners due to lack of synchronicity between programmes on either side, and funding mechanisms that rarely dovetail. In relation to the former, we recommend an approach to the synchronisation of deadlines based on the FP7 Health/US National Institutes of Health model.[14]

In promoting the aim of greater third country participation we suggest the Commission should press for funders in third countries to set aside a pool of funding to facilitate participation in Horizon 2020. As this would be a significant undertaking, we suggest that it could be carried out on a pilot basis for one of the Societal Challenges.

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9) "Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Horizon 2020 - The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020)", COM(2011) 809

10) For an example, see http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21130920

11) http://www.iua.ie/governement-launches-national-open-access-statement-23-oct-2012/

12) https://www.openaire.eu/en/about-openaire/openaire-project/objectives

13) BRIC = Brazil, Russia, India, China

14) "With regard to the funding of non-EU /non-AC participants in the projects, those from low- and middle-income countries are eligible for funding. But those from high-income countries are usually expected to cover their own expenses. An exception is made for US -based entities, which can receive funding in recognition of the fact that US National Institutes of Health (NIH) programmes are open to European researchers." From International Cooperation in EU-funded Health Research ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/ health/docs/ic-eu-funded-health_en.pdf

Public-Public and Public-Private Partnering

We welcome the opportunity for universities to be involved in Joint Programming Initiatives and ERA-NETs. Participation in Joint Technology Initiatives and other Public-Private Initiatives has been complex in FP7 and we would welcome some degree of consistency across all these "partnering" initiatives.

Synergies with European Structural and Investment Funds

Finally, we welcome the rules which allow the combination of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)[15] with Horizon 2020 funding[16]. This represents a significant opportunity to build capacity (infrastructure, human capital, research and career training programmes etc.) at national level using ESIF, which can then be further leveraged by Horizon 2020. This issue is treated in more detail in the next section.

Proposals to Maximise Ireland's Participation and Success in Horizon 2020

1) Role of Government Departments and Agencies

As national funding sources across Europe contract, research organisations both public and private will inevitably place more emphasis on European initiatives as a means to maintain and expand their research capacity. This increased focus on European funding by all Member States will increase competition within Horizon 2020. Thus, while the budget is increasing, building on (or even maintaining) Ireland's success in previous Framework Programmes will be more challenging.

Against this backdrop, it will be essential to provide strong national support for Irish applicants and, where possible, align our national research interests with those of Horizon 2020. The 2012 Report of the Research Prioritisation Steering Group[17] has outlined 14 priority areas that are to be the focus of Ireland's future State investment in research and innovation, along with six Platform Science and Technology areas which support these priority areas. These have been taken forward by the Prioritisation Action Group, but there remains insufficient attention paid to the EU dimension in this work. We recommend that this matter should be taken up as a priority in the development of a successor to the current national Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation.

National policy needs to complement the opportunities offered by Horizon 2020. National funding calls should be structured to allow researchers to build capacity in the Horizon 2020 research areas, thereby leveraging their national funding with Horizon 2020 funding. Conversely, research funders should operate schemes that provide match- or top-up funding to researchers who have successfully competed for large-scale awards in Horizon 2020: we particularly recommend the expansion of national schemes[18,19], to support

15) ESIF refers to ERDF – European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, European Social Fund, EAFRD – European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and EMFF – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

16) "An operation may receive support from one or more Common Strategic Framework (CSF) funds and from other Union instruments providing that the expenditure item included in a request for payment for reimbursement by one of the CSF funds does not receive support from another Fund or Union instrument or support from the same Fund under another programme."- Article 55(8) of "Amended proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006." COM(2012) 496 Final

17) http://www.forfas.ie/publication/search.jsp?ft=/publications/featuredpublications/title,8958,en.php

18) www.research.ie

19) SFI ERC Support Programme http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/open-calls/sfi-erc-support-programme.html and ERC Development Programme http://www.sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/open-calls/sfi-erc-development-programme.html

ERC applicants and awardees to boost Ireland's success rate in securing ERC research awards. In addition, assuming that Horizon 2020 will allow for the development of meaningful collaborations with non-European countries (USA and BRIC countries in particular), a commitment on behalf of the funding agencies to continue support for research collaborations with these countries (such as the SFI International Strategic Cooperation Award)[20] will be required. National funding should also be made available to support Irish involvement in Public-Public and Public-Private Partnering. Government should place a specific emphasis on ensuring that participation in EIT under Horizon 2020 is significantly wider than has been the case to date. The recent Enterprise Ireland initiative to stimulate Irish interest/involvement in the EIT is to be welcomed.

Particular attention should be given to supporting the many large-scale research centres set up over the past 10 years via, for example, the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLI) and SFI's funding programmes. Over time these centres have built up the capacity to compete for European funding, and this capacity, and that of future research centres, should be developed and supported by national initiatives. For example, their national funding could include a ring-fenced amount to support them in leading applications for large-scale Horizon 2020 projects. The approach of funding dedicated staff to drive the acquisition of EU funding in major centres should be seriously considered.

Strategic use of European Structural and Investment Funds

The opportunity to combine EU funding sources to support Research & Innovation is strongly welcomed by the universities.[16] As an example, European Structural and Investment Funds[15] (ESIF) could be used to build capacity at national level which would then support organisations in securing Horizon 2020 funding. Conversely, ESIF could, for example, be used to support the commercialisation of the outputs of Horizon 2020 projects. Of particular interest is the possibility to co-finance the same project with both Funds (whilst avoiding double-funding)[16] and the streamlining of the financial and reporting rules which will make this more feasible. Although the next round of ESIF naturally focuses on Less Developed and Transition Regions, approximately 25% of the proposed budget has been reserved for More Developed Regions such as Ireland.[21]

In late 2011, the Commission published a Position Paper on the Member State Partnership Agreement for ESIF in Ireland.[22] This document recommends three funding priorities to be adopted by Ireland, one of which is "Promoting R&D investment and the competitiveness of the business sector". This funding priority encompasses the thematic objectives "Strengthening research, technological development and innovation" and "Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector and the fisheries and aquaculture sector". We strongly support the inclusion of these thematic objectives in Ireland's Member State Partnership Agreement, particularly considering the universities' role in supporting the creation of innovation-focused small enterprises.

If the ESIF is to support research, it will be mandatory for a Member State or Region[23] to have developed a Smart Specialisation Strategy (S³);[24] a strategic approach to economic development through targeted support to Research and Innovation (R&I).[25] This Strategy will be the key instrument to ensuring synergy between the ESIF and Horizon 2020. An example of this synergy could be the use of ESIF funding to continue

20) http://www.sfi.ie/international/

21) European Commission Brochure "Cohesion Policy 2014 -2020: Investing in Growth and Jobs" http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/ sources/docoffic/official/regulation/pdf/2014/proposals/regulation2014_leaflet_en.pdf

22) "Position of the Commission Services on the development of Partnership Agreement and programmes in Ireland for the period 2014 – 2020" http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/pdf/partnership/ir_position_paper.pdf

23) For the purposes of CP funding, Ireland is divided into two regions: the Border, Midlands and Western Region, and the Southern and Eastern Region.

24) European Commission Factsheet "Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation" http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/ sources/docgener/informat/2014/smart_specialisation_en.pdf

25) Smart specialisation involves a process of developing a vision, identifying competitive advantage, setting strategic priorities and making use of smart policies to maximise the knowledge-based development potential of any region, strong or weak, high-tech or low-tech. http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home

the Structured Doctoral Programmes funded under PRTLI Cycle 5, which could then compete for co-financing by Horizon 2020 under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. The universities recommend that synergies such as these be considered when drafting both into our S[3] (which will of course be strongly based on the Report of the National Research Prioritisation Exercise and follow-up[26]) and the Member State Partnership Agreement.

Enhanced Cooperation with Northern Ireland

Politically and geographically, enhanced cooperation with Northern Ireland should be a national priority. According to data obtained from InterTradeIreland, the total drawdown from FP7 projects with participants from Ireland and Northern Ireland as of July 2012 is valued at €60.7 million, distributed across 69 successful North-South projects. Northern Ireland has developed a robust strategy for Horizon 2020 and is putting in place a sophisticated support system.[27] It has also taken the direct approach of supporting dedicated EU funding staff in the University of Ulster and Queens University Belfast, in addition to support offered by InterTradeIreland and InvestNI. This recognises the key role of universities in securing EU funding. It is worth noting that the Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) Amendment Bill 2012 will alter longstanding restrictions which prevent disbursement of State research funds to a scientist or project based outside the jurisdiction. Horizon 2020 bids from this island could have greater impact if made from Ireland as a whole. Given the fact that both the EU and US support cross-border initiatives, joint funding would likely help to leverage additional international support.

2) Recommendations for the National Support System for Horizon 2020

The structure developed under the aegis of Enterprise Ireland for FP7 (which involves full time National Contact Points (NCPs) located in the relevant organisations) has worked well. The National Support Network (NSN) has significantly enhanced the support given to applicants compared to that provided in FP6 and helped substantially increase returns to Ireland under FP7. The role of dedicated people was critical in this regard, in particular to the development of Work Programmes.

These supports should continue (particularly the provision of full-time NCPs to all programmes where Ireland will have involvement) but should evolve to ensure even greater participation by all sectors in Horizon 2020. 62% of all FP7 funding secured by Ireland to-date[3] has been secured by Higher Education Institutions, for the most part in collaboration with the private sector in Ireland and abroad, with 86% of this having been drawn-down by the universities.

Given the key role played by our universities we would like to see a closer alignment between the Horizon 2020 National Support Network (NSN) and the university sector and with more regular, structured engagement. This will complement and strengthen the existing collaborations between universities and enterprise.

We make the following recommendations to improve the functioning of the support structure:

- More effective financial supports for Coordinators:

    - Continue the very valuable travel and coordinators grant but give consideration to the funding being allowed to cover the contract negotiation phase;

    - Consider funding for researchers to coordinate EIT/KIC inclusion for Ireland for future waves of KICs;

    - Provide post-award funding mechanisms to assist researchers to manage Horizon 2020-funded projects.

26) Research Prioritisation: A Framework for Monitoring Public Investment in Science, Technology and Innovation" http://www.forfas.ie/publication/search.jsp?ft=/publications/2013/title,11020,en.php

27) Horizon 2020: Northern Ireland Action Plan 2013 http://www.detini.gov.uk/horizon_2020_action_plan_2013__branded__v7.pdf

- Provide financial support to recruit EU funding staff into university research offices or key research centres (e.g. Technology Centres, SFI Centres) to drive the centres' participation in Horizon 2020 and other EU funding streams;

- Facilitate greater cooperation between the NSN and the universities' Research Officers, including a regular schedule of meetings, a formal system for consultation on draft Work-Programmes, and a mechanism to identify suitable experts for Horizon 2020 proposal evaluations;

- Set clear eligibility criteria and quality control/vetting for private consultants contracted to write proposals. For example consultants could be required to provide names of researchers and administrators who could give confidential references to the NSN;

- Put in place specific support scheme(s) for programmes deemed a national priority from Ireland's perspective, e.g. scheme for identifying and nurturing potential ERC winners etc. This could be done locally as well as centrally by NSN;

- Provide more dynamic and active support for Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) in advance of Horizon 2020 Calls to lay groundwork and prepare the constituency. SSH is strong in the Irish universities and there are real opportunities for success in Horizon 2020 if this is approached correctly;

- Facilitate comprehensive sharing of data by the NSN with the universities in order that we can properly assess our levels of participation.

More general actions:

- Explore mechanisms to strengthen the role of the NSN (which will include the Enterprise Europe Network) in supporting enterprise engagement in Horizon 2020, including:

  – Facilitating better dialogue between NCPs and the private sector;

  – Providing more SME & innovation-focussed support.

- Provide a dedicated role for supporting Irish engagement in EIT in Horizon 2020 (at present the Commission has proposed that there will be no National Delegate or National Contact Point for this programme[28]). This is one scheme which requires an all-island approach with significant support from national funders. An analysis of national strengths relevant to EIT should be performed (for example, EI Technology Centres, SFI Centres, IOT Gateway Centres) to see how we can access current KICs as well as new ones. Mechanisms to support all innovation stakeholders in KIC-EIT involvement should also be considered, especially in the development of co-location centres or nodes to ensure that all elements are considered in the development of Irish involvement in EIT;

- To assist HEIs to work more effectively with industry to access the funding streams under the Industrial Leadership pillar, the NSN should convene a more formal forum involving IDA Ireland and organisations representing the private sector including Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), for example;

- Provide national assistance to ensure that Ireland participates in Public-Private and Public-Public partnering initiatives (e.g. ERA-NETs, Joint Technology Initiatives) where appropriate, including tracking the many initiatives, and guiding HEIs and applicants.

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28) It is assumed that the relevant thematic NCP will look after EIT Calls in their area.

3) Universities' Actions to Secure Horizon 2020 Funding

To complement our recommendations to government, we also set out below, a number of actions which our universities will take directly to enhance our performance under Horizon 2020. In this regard we will:

- Foster and promote cross-institutional harnessing of research and innovation expertise to facilitate greater competitiveness;

- Establish a partnership with industry representative associations (IBEC, ISME etc.) to seek out collaborations with the private sector in order to maximise the return from the "Industrial Leadership" Pillar and all areas of Horizon 2020;

- Work to maximise commercialisation opportunities arising from Horizon 2020 projects using the national technology transfer infrastructure, which has been strengthened by the establishment of the Central Technology Transfer Office;

- Work in partnership with universities and companies in Northern Ireland, InterTradeIreland and InvestNI to develop more collaborative ventures for Horizon 2020;

- Develop targeted Horizon 2020/EU funding strategies for large-scale centres;

- Attract excellent people for European Research Council (ERC) funding, target those with high potential already here and nurture them to develop successful ERC applications. Analyse the numbers and quality of applications which have not been funded to encourage reapplication from high scoring but not funded candidates;

- Provide institutional-level incentives to attract and retain ERC award holders;

- Target COFUND under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – a major opportunity for co-financing Structured Doctoral Programmes and Postdoctoral Fellowship positions;

- Encourage university staff to put themselves forward as Experts (to evaluate for Horizon 2020 funding Calls and participate in Horizon 2020 Advisory Groups), and to engage with significant groupings that influence programme content, such as Technology Platforms;

- Set-up a policy and strategy working group as a sub-group of the IUA Research Officers Group to assist the Vice Presidents/Deans of Research in implementing their Horizon 2020 strategy.

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