

Horizon 2020 – Is it for me?

Horizon 2020 (H2020), the EU's Research and Innovation Framework Programme (H2020) is a single programme covering research, innovation and market transformation with a focus on EU societal challenges, such as Secure, clean and efficient energy. As such Energy H2020 is a successor to both the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) and the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme (IEE).

Participating in H2020 has many potential benefits. For a start, you can receive 100% of eligible direct costs when undertaking Research and Innovation Actions (RIA) as part of a European consortium which shares knowledge, skills and expertise. Organisations can receive 70% -100% funding for Innovation Actions (IA). Taking part may enable you to become involved in ambitious, leading-edge projects and perhaps give you access to new business markets. However, application is not for the faint-hearted. Preparing a proposal takes considerable time and effort, proposals must be submitted in the European Commission (EC) format, project selection is competitive, and if successful you will have to work and report under agreed Commission procedures. There are 7 key issues to consider before deciding whether H2020 is for you.

1. Does your idea fit with the EC priorities?

H2020 is driven by *Work Programmes* such as the Secure, clean and efficient energy work programme, which outline the key priorities and topic areas identified by the European Commission and specific *Calls for Proposals* which list the topics open for submission of proposals at a particular time. Your idea needs to fit what the Commission is looking for within a Work Programme, you are unlikely to be able to "shoehorn" a different idea to fit.

2. Does the activity that you plan to undertake fit with H2020 Funding Actions?

The type of activity you want to carry out needs to fit with what is expected by the European Commission. The H2020 Calls identify the type of Funding Action sought, this identifies the type of activity to be funded and gives a steer on the types of organisation to involve in a consortium. For example, RIAs include basic and applied research, technology development and integration, testing and validation on a small scale prototype in a laboratory or simulated environment. However, IAs are focused on demonstration or pilots to validate technical and economic viability of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution in an operational (or near operational) environment. Proposals must have measurable objectives achievable during the project as a result of activities and also address exploitation of results. Other types of funding include Coordination and Support Actions (CSA), which fund activities to improve market conditions and aid market transformation e.g. standardisation, fostering dialogue, capacity building (similar to FP7 CSA and IEE activities)¹.

3. Do you want to be part of a European project?

H2020 requires you to be part of a European consortium, usually from a minimum of 3 Member States (MS) or Associated Countries (AC)², which undertake work that is both innovative at a European level and which will make an impact at a European level. If you really want funding for a UK-focused project then H2020 is unlikely to be for you.

¹ See the EU Energy Focus Funding Action Factsheet for details on all types of Funding Actions

² See the EU Energy Focus H2020 Eligibility Factsheet for further details

4. Are you prepared to share the work and results?

Most projects require at least 3 independent partners from 3 different MS or AC, each of which must have a genuine role and a reasonable share of the project work and funding. Projects with “token” partners, or with one partner carrying out most of the work and receiving a large proportion of the funding, are unlikely to be successful.

5. Is your project of a suitable size and can you finance some of the cost?

Most topics in the Energy Challenge Work Programme give an indication of project size, although this does not preclude submission and selection of proposals requesting other amounts. This indicates the level of ambition and impact expected.

The Commission provides funding on a cost-share basis, based on the reimbursement of eligible costs. This can be up to 100% for RIA and Coordination and Support Actions (CSA) and 70%-100% for IA. There is also a flat rate contribution towards overheads of 25% of eligible direct costs, excluding subcontracting and 3rd party resources. You will need to be able to provide the balance of the funding yourself or provide evidence of third party funding in order to be successful. Note that no profit can be made directly from the EU funds received, only from the exploitation of the results of the activities.

6. Are you prepared to work with established H2020 procedures?

H2020 has fixed Call deadlines for proposal submission, it is hoped that contracts will be signed 8 months after proposal submission. Projects will have a fixed duration, typically 2-5 years, and must meet agreed reporting requirements, such as direct costs being receipted and timesheets being kept. You need to conform to these requirements to receive funding, and may have to repay funds received if you fail to provide appropriate evidence of costs incurred.

7. Are you prepared to submit a proposal in a competitive process?

Preparing a H2020 proposal is time-consuming for all partners, and particularly for the Coordinator. You need to be aware that H2020 is a very competitive programme and accept that you are submitting a proposal on this basis.

In conclusion, you need to be able to answer yes to all 7 questions to consider submitting a proposal under H2020. If you think you fit and are up to the challenge please contact us with a summary of your proposal idea, the Call topic it fits under, indicative size and key partners so that we can discuss your idea with you and identify what support we can offer to help you prepare a successful proposal. If you didn't answer yes to all 7 questions we are happy to hear from you so that we can try to signpost you to other sources of funding where appropriate.

The EU Energy Focus service is a free, Government-funded service that aims to ensure that UK companies, research institutions and other organisations are well informed and have every chance of success in applying for and securing European funding for energy-related projects.

Our contact details for your queries and requests to be added to our database are:

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