# DIGITALEUROPE's Response to the Open Survey on Horizon 2020 Simplification

*Brussels*, 23 October 2015

## Introduction
## PLEASE READ BEFORE STARTING
You'll need about **20-30 minutes** for this survey.
Horizon 2020's design and rules have been simplified to make them more user-friendly. The implementing procedures arge also simpler now.
18 months into the programme, this survey is designed to:
- find out what you think about the impact of the existing simplification measures
- gather any ideas you may have for further simplification.

Save your answers as you go so you can complete the survey at more than one sitting if necessary.
## Deadline - 23 October 2015
Simplification includes:
- less administrative burden
- better guidelines
- faster procedures.
Please bear this in mind when answering the questions.
Any data you submit to this survey will be uploaded and held securely in line with Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals' personal data. For full details, see the Specific Privacy Statement.
Most questions are mandatory. You can make further comments and suggestions if you wish. If you don't know the answer to a question, or it doesn't apply to you, please select 'Don't know'.
Any questions?
Please email: RTD-OPEN-SURVEY-H2020-SIMPLIFICATION@ec.europa.eu
Many thanks for your contribution,
The survey team

## 1. Information on your organisation

**\***Your organisation type is:
O Higher or Secondary Education Establishment
O Non-profit Research Organisation
O Public body (excluding Research Organisations and Higher or Secondary Education Establishments)
O Private for-profit entities (excluding Higher/Secondary Education Establishments)
O Non-Governmental Organisation
O International Organisation
X Other

Please specify:

*300 character(s) maximum*

DIGITALEUROPE represents the digital technology industry in Europe. Our members are some of the world's largest IT, telecoms and consumer electronics companies and national associations from every part of Europe.

**\*** Is your organisation a Small or Medium-sized Enterprise (SME)?

O Yes

X No

O Don't know

**\*** Country where your organisation is established:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Albania | France | Netherlands |
| Austria | Germany | Norway |
| Belgium | Greece | Poland |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | Hungary | Portugal |
| Bulgaria | Iceland | Romania |
| Croatia | Ireland | Serbia |
| Cyprus | Israel | Slovakia |
| Czech Republic | Italy | Spain |
| Denmark | Latvia | Sweden |
| Estonia | Lithuania | Switzerland |
| Faroe Islands | Luxembourg | Turkey |
| Finland | Malta | Ukraine |
| Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia | Moldova | United Kingdom |
| | Montenegro | X Other |

**\*** Please specify:

*25 character(s) maximum*

DIGITALEUROPE's members include 59 corporate members and 35 national trade associations from across Europe. Some of our members have legal entities in Associated Countries, non-Associated Countries and in Member States, who actively participate in Horizon 2020.

**\*** Have you experienced any problems related to the fact that you are neither in one of the EU Member States, nor in one of the countries Associated to Horizon 2020?

X Yes

O No

**\*** Please specify:

1. Affiliates coverage in the RfP only extends to EU-based affiliates.
2. We see increased use of the optional Art 30.3 in GAs. This requires EC approval to share IP with affiliates in 3rd countries, making participation by any MNC impossible.

Both issues are counter to the spirit of simplification. Access rights and the right to transfer results should include global legal entities. Art 30.3 should only be invoked in cases clearly meeting the grounds defined in the RfP and must not be a default.

**\*** Have you participated in an EU research funded project under Horizon 2020, or under an earlier Framework Programme (FP7, FP6...)?
X Yes, under Horizon 2020
X Yes, under an earlier Framework Programme (FP7, FP6...)
O No, I have never participated in an EU research funded project

## 2. Horizon 2020 simplification measures
*Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements about the main Horizon 2020 simplification measures. Comments fields allow you to develop your answers further and offer suggestions for improvement.*

**\*** In your opinion, are the processes of proposal preparation & submission and of grant preparation in Horizon 2020 simpler than those in FP7?
O Yes
O No
X Don't know

**\*** Please specify:

The participant portal of Horizon 2020 has been improved compared to FP7 although the search facility within the portal could be improved, as users currently resort to external search engines. However, the effort to prepare a proposal is still very high or even higher. Even a further simplification of administrative processes would not alleviate this problem.

For each of the following simplification measures, please indicate to what extent you have felt the benefit of the simplification.

| | Very beneficial | Fairly beneficial | Neutral / Don't know | Not very beneficial | Not at all beneficial |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **\*** The single reimbursement rate in a project *(no differentation by type of activity or category of organisation)* | | X | | | |
| **\*** The single flat rate (25%) for indirect costs | | | X | | |
| **\*** The reduced requirements for work-time recording *(for details see pp 156-157 of the Annotated Grant Agreement)* | | | X | | |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **\*** Fewer ex-ante financial viability checks *(only private coordinating organisations are checked)* | | | X | | |
| **\*** The self-assessment of SME status *(as compared to a formal validation process based on supporting financial documents)* | | | X | | |
| **\*** The reduced number of certificates on financial statements (only at the time of the final reporting) | | | X | | |
| **\*** Electronic-only signature of grant agreements | | X | | | |
| **\*** The Participant Portal as a one-stop shop for all interactions with the Commission in managing proposals and grants | X | | | | |

According to you, is it possible to further simplify the following:

| | Yes | No | Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|
| **\*** The rules on reimbursement | X | | |
| **\*** Reimbursement of indirect costs | X | | |
| **\*** Requirements for work-time recording | | | X |
| **\*** Ex-ante financial viability checks | | | X |
| **\*** The process which establishes that an enterprise is an SME | | | X |

**\*** Please specify how you think the **rules on reimbursement** could be simplified further:
*500 character(s) maximum*

The reimbursement rate is not really "single": industry gets 70% in IA and FTI projects, whereas the non-profit sector gets 100%.

Beneficiaries want to be allowed to make use of their own usual accounting principles (like under FP7). For the direct costs, the calculation of the productive hours has become more complex compared to FP7. Most companies calculate an average fully loaded cost rate, i.e. an average rate combining direct personnel cost with indirect cost. If such an approach would be accepted this would significantly simplify cost calculation in our case.

**\*** Please specify how you think the **reimbursement of indirect costs** could be simplified further:
*500 character(s) maximum*
Additional option for reimbursement on the basis of real indirect costs: allow charging of indirect costs based on the accounts of the beneficiaries instead of the 25% flat rate because this flat rate introduced an extra and parallel accounting, deviating from the usual accounting principles of the beneficiary.

**\*** Please specify how you think **requirements for work-time recording** could be simplified further:
*500 character(s) maximum*

**\*** Please indicate how you think **ex-ante financial viability checks** could be simplified further:
*500 character(s) maximum*
Not applicable

**\*** Please specify how you think the **process which establishes that an enterprise is an SME** could be simplified further:
*500 character(s) maximum*
Not applicable

**\*** According to you, how efficient is the overall process for validation of organisations?
This process comprises all aspects related to: organisation registration and obtaining a Participant Identification Code (PIC), validation of legal entities, LEAR appointment, updating organisational data, etc.
O Very efficient
X Fairly efficient
O Neutral / Don't know
O Not very efficient
O Not at all efficient

**\*** Please specify:
The ECAS system works very well. However, we occasionally need to switch to another browser in order to perform certain actions.

According to you, which of the following would help reduce oversubscription?
*at most 4 choice(s)*

O Very short opening periods for calls (*e.g. calls open for less than 3 months*)
O 2-stage calls
O A top-down approach to topic definition
X Other
O Don't know

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Please specify:
*500 character(s) maximum*

In highly dynamic domains such as ICT 2-stage calls should be avoided. If used, the initial length of a proposal to be submitted in stage 1 should not exceed a length of 20 pages and a strong filtering process should take place. The 2nd stage must be more selective (success rate of at least 33% or even if possible 50%). The scope of the call objective must be narrowed, meaning that the challenge/problem that has to be solved must be more focused on topic and/or impact. The solutions should remain non-prescriptive in regards to the technologies to be used for solving the technical problem/challenge. In LEIT and Societal Challenges, proposals should be first evaluated on impact and only then on excellence.

*According to you, is **the shortening of the time**, to a maximum of 8 months, **between the closure of a call and signature of a grant agreement** a positive step?
O Strongly agree
X Agree
O Neutral / Don't know
O Disagree
O Strongly disagree

Comments:
*500 character(s) maximum*
The consortia need time to negotiate the CA and MGA so the first 5 months of the 8 must be reduced what factually is already the case (evaluations and ranking are done much quicker than 5 months). Then more time is left for the most difficult part: negotiations with consortium and finally finishing the MGA.

*In H2020, proposals selected for funding are turned into grants as they were submitted- without requesting changes to the technical content (the 'no-negotiation' approach). Is this a simplification?
O Strongly agree
X Agree
O Neutral / Don't know
O Disagree
O Strongly disagree

Comments:
*500 character(s) maximum*
The reduced time to grant as consequence is perceived as positive, however sometimes it could be beneficial for EC and Consortium to be allowed to make small technical changes/ adaptations to the technical work programme. The take-it-or-leave-it approach on Grant Agreement is in contradiction with notion of «agreement». This is particularly troublesome for legal and IP terms and conditions, as Model Grant Agreement goes in many instances much farther than stipulated in Rules for Participation.

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## 3. Use of support documents and services

**\*** Did you ever use any of the online support features or information available on the Participant Portal?
X Yes
O No

|  | Very useful | Fairly useful | Neutral / Don't know | Not very useful | Not at all useful |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Horizon 2020 Online Manual | X |  |  |  |  |
| Reference documents page | X |  |  |  |  |
| Horizon 2020 Annotated Grant Agreement | X |  |  |  |  |
| Horizon 2020 Work Programmes | X |  |  |  |  |
| Horizon 2020 Helpdesk |  | X |  |  |  |
| FAQ |  | X |  |  |  |

**\*** Please indicate which ones:
*at most 6 choice(s)*
X H2020 Online Manual
X Reference documents page
X Horizon 2020 Annotated Grant Agreement
X Horizon 2020 Work Programmes
X Horizon 2020 Helpdesk
X FAQ
How useful was this support feature?
*at most 6 answered row(s)*

**\*** According to you, can any of these support documents or services be improved?
X Yes
O No
O Don't know

**\*** Please describe how:
*500 character(s) maximum*
The reaction time of the helpdesk is by far too long: 1-2 weeks as reaction time is not acceptable for beneficiaries. Beneficiaries turn to the helpdesk only with urgent unclear issues because the standard

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documentation is really clear. Therefore a quick reaction would be a clear improvement. In addition, a separate financial guideline document would be helpful.

**\*** How easy to use was the National Contact Point (NCP) search facility on the Participant Portal?

X Very easy
O Fairly easy
O Neutral / Don't know
O Not very easy
O Not at all easy

**\*** According to you, how could it be improved?
*500 character(s) maximum*

**\*** Have you attended any of the Horizon 2020 Information Days, or any other information session(s) organised by the Commission in Member States?

X Yes
O No

**\*** How useful did you find these Information Days/Information sessions?

O Very useful
X Fairly useful
O Neutral / Don't know
O Not very useful
O Not at all useful

Comment:
No comment

## 4. Future simplification options for Horizon 2020

**\*** The basic funding model in Horizon 2020 is based on **real-cost reimbursement for direct costs** and a **25% flat-rate for indirect costs**. Do you see any simplification potential in replacing real-cost funding with/extending the use of, **alternative funding models** (e.g. lump sums, unit costs, flat rates)?

O Yes
O No
X Don't know

**\*** Please indicate which of the following alternatives to real-cost funding you would like to see used more often in Horizon 2020. You may select more than one option.
*between 1 and 3 choices*
*Output-based funding using lump sums means fixing, in the grant agreement, lump sum amounts for concrete, precisely defined deliverables. The lump sums are paid against provision of the deliverables without the need to report any costs incurred - but with the additional requirement that the proposal must precisely specify and justify each deliverable and the lump sums linked to them. Failure to produce an agreed deliverable will result in no payment being made.*

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*Unit costs* *are based on the definition of a unit and an amount per unit. Only the number of units used has to be reported and justified, not the actual costs incurred. Example: Funding in Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions: The unit is the researcher month, the pre-defined amount per unit is the monthly allowance.*

*Flat rates* *are percentages applied to cost items for covering other cost items. For these other cost items to be covered by the flat rate, no cost reporting or justification is needed. Example: the flat rate of 25%, applied to the project's direct cost, for covering indirect costs.*

O Output-based funding using lump sums
O Unit costs
O Flat rates


**\***Please specify:
*500 character(s) maximum*


Not applicable


**\***Do you consider another European, national or regional research funding programme to be simpler  and more user-friendly than Horizon 2020?
X Yes
O No
O Don't know


**\***Please indicate the name of this programme(s) and, if possible, the funding organisation(s).
*500 character(s) maximum*
1.   Eureka, e.g. ITEA3, CELTIC-Plus
2.   National R&D funding programmes (e.g. German BMBF, French ANR and FUI)


**\***When compared with Horizon 2020, that programme has (tick all options that apply):
*at most 7 choice(s)*
X Simpler financial rules
O Better IT tools
X Lighter and quicker procedures (to submit proposals and to negotiate and implement projects)
X Fewer reporting requirements
O Fewer audits
O Better evaluation system leading to granting better projects
O Other features not listed above


**\***Please specify:
*500 character(s) maximum*
1.   Eureka is more flexible and contains less red tape but it is very difficult to synchronize funding between participating countries.
2.   National R&D funding programmes (e.g. German BMBF, French ANR and FUI) are more accepting of the usual accounting principles of the beneficiaries. Audits are not as complicated compared to the

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EU audits. There are fewer reporting requirements for administrative and financial aspects (EU requires at least 2 parallel accounting systems).

## Your number one simplification idea?

What would be your number 1 priority for a single concrete **simplification measure** in Horizon 2020?
*500 character(s) maximum*

The Number 1 issue to be addressed must be oversubscription, as it could lead to a decrease of industry participation because of too low success rates and increased proposal preparation time to possibly comply with proposal selection criteria (some proposals are currently not selected despite their scores of 14.0 - 14.5/15). Strategic objectives in the forthcoming Work Programme should be more focused. Also see answer in corresponding question above.

## Follow-up to this survey
Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire.
Feedback on your experience of H2020 will be used to assess the effectiveness of simplification measures already in place and to develop new measures for further simplification of H2020 in the future.
You can choose to stay anonymous but we would be very grateful if we could recontact you in the second phase of the survey. If you agree to this, please provide below an e-mail address:
annika.eberstein@digitaleurope.org

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# ABOUT DIGITALEUROPE

**DIGITALEUROPE** represents the digital technology industry in Europe. Our members include some of the world's largest IT, telecoms and consumer electronics companies and national associations from every part of Europe. DIGITALEUROPE wants European businesses and citizens to benefit fully from digital technologies and for Europe to grow, attract and sustain the world's best digital technology companies.

**DIGITALEUROPE** ensures industry participation in the development and implementation of EU policies. DIGITALEUROPE's members include 59 corporate members and 35 national trade associations from across Europe. Our website provides further information on our recent news and activities: http://www.digitaleurope.org


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