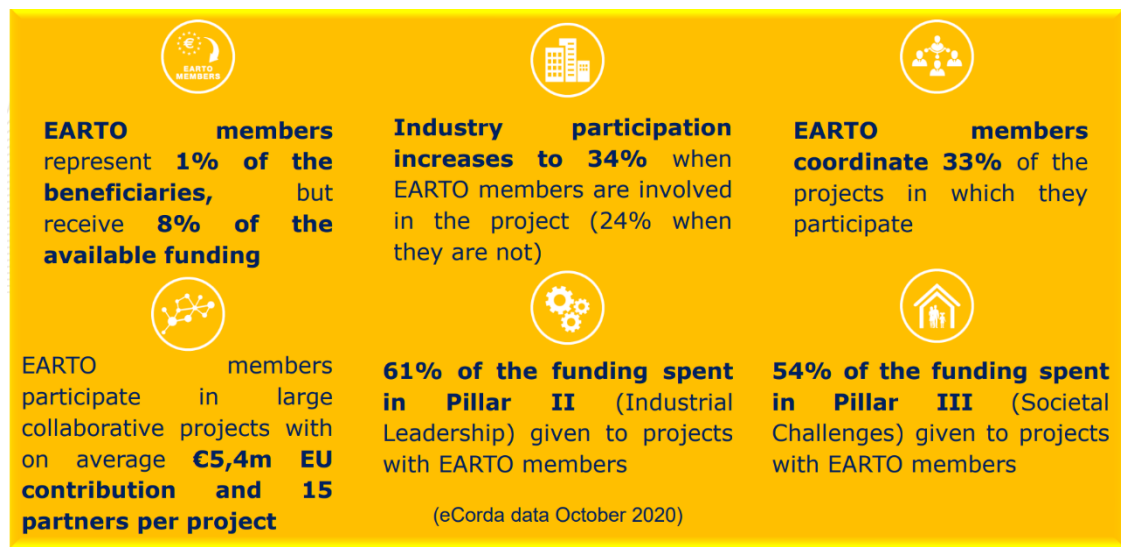


EARTO Answer to the EC Consultations on Horizon Europe Interim Evaluation & Horizon 2020 Final Evaluation

26 July 2022

EARTO Members have been very active participants in EU RD&I Framework Programmes for the last decades. In [our last Horizon 2020 analysis](#), the share of EU grants to Research & Technology Organisations (RTOs) is relatively larger than RTOs' share in the total number of FP participants. RTOs have a leading position and driving role in FPs' multi-disciplinary and collaborative projects. FP projects where RTOs are active have a larger participation from industry than projects without RTOs, as shown in the graph below.



Currently, EARTO members are involved in many instruments of the Horizon Europe programme. EARTO is waiting to access the new eCORDA database to evaluate its members' participation into the new Framework Programme compared to the figures shown above. While waiting to be able to do a proper analysis, we collected our members' first experiences of the Programme and have been positively surprised by the success rates in the first calls Horizon Europe: there has been no drastic reduction of those as it has been usual in earlier Framework Programmes' first calls.

Our members mentioned **four issues that should be quickly looked at:**

1. **Final Rules of participation:** This is a major issue for beneficiaries. It is simply not acceptable that beneficiaries are still missing the final version of the Annotated Model Grant Agreement while they are signing grant and consortium agreements. We understand the need of a coordination of efforts between various EU programmes, however this should not impact beneficiaries of the largest programme directly managed by the EC being Horizon Europe.
2. **Quality of the Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs):** The poor quality of ESRs has been over the last FPs a recurrent issue. It seems even more predominant in this FP with a lack of consistency and quality of the ESRs received by applicants. The fact that evaluation and possibly consensus meetings are held online may not help with improving ESRs' quality.
3. **Overview of EC Studies launched to prepare the Mid-Term Review:** As key RD&I stakeholder, we have been approached by various EC-sponsored consortia running studies aiming to prepare the mid-term review. While we are very glad to provide inputs, we would also very much appreciate to have a proper overview of the various studies launched by the EC to plan our inputs to those as well as to be able to read the implications and imbrications of the various studies as a whole package of preparatory efforts. Being glad to support these efforts, we see many areas of work to be analysed such as: the impact change of structure (merging KETs and societal challenges), the proportionality between single beneficiary instruments vs multi-beneficiaries (i.e. collaborative projects) as well as TRLs level, the impact of the new instruments such as missions and the new widening measures, the impact of the new capping of budgets on partnerships, the analysis of the

lump-sums after a full cycle (including ex-post audits), etc. We would be glad to see if all issues of importance are covered by the planned studies while avoiding overlaps.

4. **IT glitches of the participants' portal:** There have been more IT glitches than with the same systems used in the last calls of Horizon 2020. Here proper collection of users' feedbacks by the EC IT services could easily identify those to allow finding and quickly implementing IT solutions.

In preparation of the mid-term review, EARTO would like to point out the following issues to be further analysed in the upcoming two years:

1. **Instability of the RD&I Budget in the Multi-Financial Framework:** The instability of this budget is two-folds: first within the MFF/EU budget being re-discussed every year, we see a regular position from the EU Council to reduce attributions to the RD&I budget while the European Parliament is pushing this one up again in the negotiations, and second, within the EU FP itself, there has been many changes in budget allocations.
2. **Launching the New EU Strategy on Technology Infrastructures:** here EARTO would like to stress the importance of the upcoming new strategy being set up by the EC hand-in-hand with Members States to complete the current EU technology roadmaps (ERA action 12). EARTO is very much looking forward to the launch of the piloting of this new strategy ad the upcoming setting up of an advisory expert group in order to prepare further work at the mid-term of the programme.
3. **Proportionality of TRLs levels to allow proper portfolio management:** The need of economic recovery combined with the new structure with an all-inclusive Pillar 2 with no separate KETs programme, the capping of partnerships' budget in each cluster, the fact that all topics related to a partnership (incl. low TRL research) have to be included within said partnership, have led to a too low coverage of the collaborative excellence basic research in Clusters. There is a need to rebalance the TRLs' coverage to allow planning future RD&I portfolios for the next FPs.
4. **Use of the lump-sums (LS):** While we understand this would be a simplification for the EC services, EARTO believes that the broader use of lump sum funding is premature, especially for large collaborative research projects (especially, our members are experiencing a lack of genuine collaboration among partners in large projects working with LS due to too many WPs and isolated task responsibilities to minimise risks). [EARTO with EUA and CESAER](#) already called (i) for caution on the interpretation of the interim analysis, and (ii) to await the final and thorough evaluation of the pilot.
5. **Evaluation of the EU Missions:** Considering the large delay incurred in launching those missions, and looking at their first calls, it is unclear at this stage whether the EU Missions will be able to deliver impact. Indeed, their first calls seem to be or 1) financing the implementation of already existing solutions by regions and cities which could very well be financed by the structural funds (i.e. with no RD&I component) or 2) looking at coordination of efforts that could be better done by already existing instruments avoiding unnecessary duplication of instruments, such as the EU partnerships (by e.g. by supporting different partnership's coordination via financing well-though CSAs providing stakeholders with the proper means to organise such coordination' efforts).

EARTO remains ready to provide additional input on each topic mentioned above: this is a first preliminary assessment of the current implementation of the programme which has started with delays, it will take some more time to bring out further experiences. In all cases, our experts are available for further discussion with EU institutions to ensure a successful implementation of Horizon Europe.

EARTO - European Association of Research and Technology Organisations

Founded in 1999, EARTO promotes RTOs and represents their interest in Europe. EARTO network counts over 350 RTOs in more than 32 countries. EARTO members represent 150,000 highly-skilled researchers and engineers managing a wide range of innovation infrastructures.

RTOs - Research and Technology Organisations

From the lab to your everyday life. RTOs innovate to improve your health and well-being, your safety and security, your mobility and connectivity. RTOs' technologies cover all scientific fields. Their work ranges from basic research to new products and services' development. RTOs are non-profit organisations whose core mission is to produce, combine and bridge various types of knowledge, skills and infrastructures to deliver a range of research and development activities in collaboration with public and industrial partners of all sizes. These activities aim to result in technological and social innovations and system solutions that contribute to and mutually reinforce their economic, societal and policy impacts.

EARTO Working Group RD&I Programmes: is composed of more than 160 experts. This WG is looking at the implementation of the EU RD&I Framework Programmes (Horizon 2020 & Horizon Europe), focusing on monitoring their elaboration, simplification and evaluation. This WG is also looking at how RTOs can be involved in and benefit from projects under the European Digital Programme as well as the European Structural and Investment Funds, but also the role of RTOs in Smart Specialisation Strategies as well as the synergies between the Cohesion Policy and the EU RD&I Programmes.

EARTO Contact: www.earto.eu