



# FIT-4-NMP

## How to Increase the Participation of Talented Newcomers in Horizon Europe NMP Projects?



### Rationale

The **FIT-4-NMP project focus on newcomer engagement** is motivated by the outcomes of high-level studies of the H2020 programme implementation. For example, the Horizon 2020 interim evaluation report published by the European Commission in 2017 states that “improvements in programme implementation are needed to attract new participants to projects”, notwithstanding that more than half of H2020 participants were newcomers. In parallel, the Horizon 2020 Advisory Group for Nanotechnologies, Advanced Materials, Biotechnology and Advanced Manufacturing and Processing highlighted that only 38.4 % of European beneficiaries were newcomers in the NMBP programme under Horizon 2020 as of November 2018. The Advisory Group’s report paid particular attention to the actions that might help outreach to new players in NMBP field.

The report on **How to Increase the Participation of Talented Newcomers in Horizon Europe NMP Projects** elaborated within the FIT-4-NMP project looks specifically at good practices and experiences in the implementation of policy measures to support participation in the Horizon 2020 programme and summarises the main areas of action that should be addressed at European, national, regional and institutional level in removing existing barriers to participation in the Horizon Europe programme.



### Good practices

Policy-makers at European, national, regional and institutional levels are striving to create the conditions for effective participation of research and innovation teams in the Framework Programmes. The aim is to maximise the benefits of such participation for the qualitative development of research and innovation activities, strengthening international cooperation and delivering results for the benefit of EU society.

At EU level, **the cascade funding, also known as Financial Support for Third Parties**, has been specifically created by the European Commission with the aim of distributing funding to create new companies and increase their scalability and to create new SMEs or mid-cap companies via the digital innovation scheme.

At national and regional levels, there are in particular systemic policy measures, financial incentives and information support that aim to remove barriers to participation related to the motivation to submit project proposals and barriers to participation related to readiness for and success of proposals.

The main **systemic policy measures** to promote participation in H2020 include incentives for international research collaboration and internationalisation in national/regional research evaluation systems. On the one hand, the emphasis on international cooperation in the research evaluation criteria demonstrates a clear intention of research and innovation policies to foster the internationalisation of research and, at the same time, motivates evaluated entities to take international research cooperation into account in their strategies and objectives. Another systemic tool for the development of international cooperation applied at national level are the ERA-Net Cofund initiatives, which interconnect national and regional research programmes.

The second group of instruments to strengthen participation in H2020 applied at national level consists of **financial incentives**. These instruments generally seek to incentivise research organisations and enterprises to prepare and submit project proposals to the Framework Programmes. The economic rationale behind these instruments is to try to reduce the costs associated with project preparation, usually in case project proposals are not successful and projects are not funded by the Framework Programmes. The investment in project preparation will thus be fully or partially recovered from the national or regional funding bodies in the form of financial reimbursement of preparation costs or through funding of the unsuccessful project proposals.

In addition to systemic measures and direct financial incentives, national and regional policies also play an important role in providing **information and advisory support** for participation in the Framework Programmes. These services are of particular importance for newcomers to Framework programmes, as they raise awareness of the H2020 calls and rules, but also help to understand the context of the calls and their links to the objectives of European research and innovation policy. It is a good understanding of this context that enables applicants to target their

project proposals properly to European objectives and to set project activities towards the expected impact. This naturally increases the chances of success of the submitted project proposals in the evaluation process.

At institutional levels, there are specific schemes and tools to encourage participation in the Framework Programmes particularly at universities and larger research organisations. These are usually part of broader measures to support the internationalisation of the institution. An important prerequisite for the introduction of specialised support for participation in the Framework Programmes is the existence of a **professional grant office** that provides researchers with a quality service in the preparation of the international cooperation project proposal and in its subsequent implementation.



## Recommendations

The report suggested 5 main directions for interventions that can help increase the participation of newcomers in HE projects.

		HE programme level	NCPs and other intermediaries	National/regional authorities	Institutional management
Type of policy intervention	Funding instruments	<i>Cascade grants; Incentives for newcomers; Hop-on mechanism; ERA-NET Cofunds</i>		<i>Seal of excellence schemes; Grants for project preparations (kick-start grants); PoC grants for FP results</i>	<i>Grants for project preparations</i>
	Training	<i>Mutual-learning communities; NCP projects</i>	<i>E-learning platforms; Targeted training programmes; Mutual-learning communities</i>	<i>Mutual-learning communities</i>	<i>Mutual-learning communities</i>
	Consultancy	<i>Pre-proposal check</i>	<i>Quality check of proposals; Administrative support and guidance</i>		<i>Professional grant offices</i>
	Building networks	<i>Match-making</i>	<i>Brokerage events; Leveraging cluster initiatives</i>	<i>Visibility and attractiveness of potential newcomers</i>	<i>Strategic partnerships</i>
	Capacity building	<i>Demonstrating impact of FP projects</i>	<i>Systematic mapping of potential newcomers; Demonstrating impact of FP projects</i>	<i>Secondment of national experts to Horizon Europe</i>	

The study shows that it is useful to implement the different tools at several levels, namely at the HE programme level, at the national/regional level, at the level of NCPs and other intermediaries, and also at the institutional level. The effects of these measures can be expected to increase if the proposed measures are implemented at all the levels mentioned.