

In Focus: Research funding opportunities and research funding performance of WBC

1 Introduction

The European Commission will invest almost €16 billion in research and innovation in the next two years under Horizon 2020, the EU's research and innovation funding scheme, following a new Work Programme for 2016-17 adopted in October 2015. All Western Balkan countries (except Kosovo* which also can participate as a third country) are associated to Horizon 2020, thus legal entities from Associated Countries can participate under the same conditions as legal entities from the Member States. Following the first preliminary results of the WBC participation in Horizon 2020, indicating overall low participation rate (Albania: 10%; Bosnia & Herzegovina: 13%; FYROM: 15%; Montenegro: 18%; Serbia: 11% and in particular low participation of industry/SMEs) – research organisations from WBC, universities, SMEs and single researchers are invited to put their ideas on paper and find partners to jointly prepare excellent proposals within a new work programme 2016/2017.

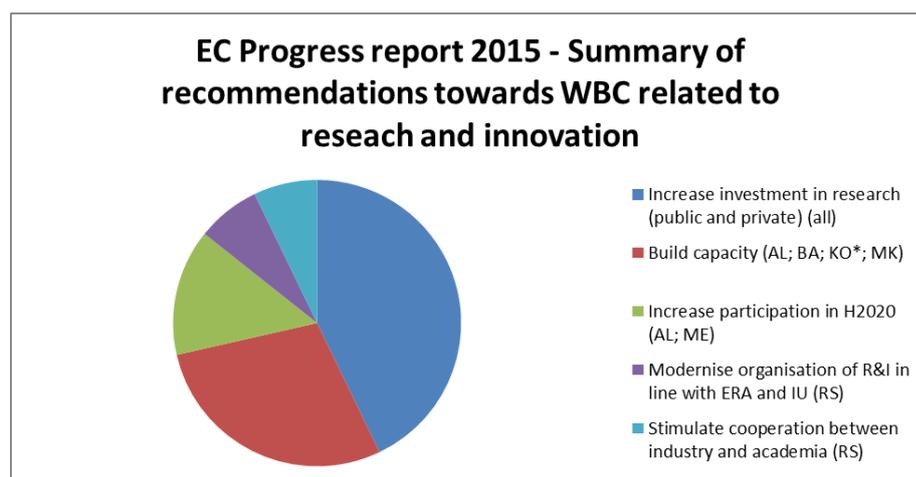
“Horizon 2020 will continue to fund researchers and innovators at the cutting edge of their research disciplines, working on the latest breakthroughs in science. It supports projects across the cycle from research to innovation, using a range of financial instruments to facilitate their exploitation and access to markets. It will also invest in training of researchers including exchanges between industry and academia, create opportunities to build research teams in Member States where the research and innovation potential is underexploited, and take a strategic approach to international cooperation in research and innovation. In line with the "Open Science, Open Innovation, Open to the World" agenda set by Commissioner Moedas, responsible for Research, Science and Innovation, the Work Programme is designed to open up European research and innovation, for instance, by attracting more SMEs; ensuring better use of research results and strengthening research cooperation with other countries. It will also greatly enhance the impact of EU research funding, in line with the EU Budget focused on Results strategy launched by the Commission Vice President Kristalina Georgieva, responsible for budget and human resources.” (Source: European Commission - Fact Sheet, MEMO/15/5832)

There are several topics introduced within different calls for proposals in Horizon 2020 but also some other current or future funding programmes which might be of high interest for Western Balkan countries. Please find some selected calls and useful documents at the WBC-RTI.info website.

2 Research funding performance in WBC: Low success rates in Horizon 2020 - country capacity and project management barriers to overcome

The social and political problems, and currently the migration crisis are still more pressing in WBC than the low level of national R&D investment (Serbia and Montenegro spend on around 1% of GDP on R&D, while other countries in the region spend up to 0,3% of GDP). Following the [Progress Reports 2014 for WBC](#) within the “Enlargement package” adopted each year by the Commission - the progress made in Science and Research is assessed in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo as limited, in Serbia some progress and FYR of Macedonia and Montenegro good progress was identified. In Albania further capacity building and investment in research are required to ensure integration into the ERA and contribution to the Innovation Union. Also increased efforts for successful participation in Horizon 2020 are necessary. Similar assessment is made for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*.

However in all WB countries the need to strengthen the research and innovation capacity at national level through increased investment in research both from public and private sector ([again confirmed by newly published EC progress reports 2015](#) - please see the visualisation below)



as well as the need to strengthen the administrative capacity to ensure successful participation in Horizon 2020 is evident and confirmed by several studies so far. Also Danube-INCO.NET study on cooperation barriers, published in June 2015 and including information for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia concludes:

The barriers relating to the capacity on the country level and the barriers relating to the project management are perceived as the most important with regard to the RTDI cooperation among the Danube Region countries.

Country capacity barriers relate to the objective situation in the country, financial support and investment in science. Project management barriers relate to the low capacity of researchers to submit and manage the project.

General data on international cooperation of the respondents of the study were assessed on the basis of their experience in cooperation

with the DR countries, level of experience in transnational RTDI cooperation programmes and level of barriers encountered in participating to these programmes.

Levels of experience in the transnational RTDI cooperation programmes show a great variety per country groups.

It is apparent that the level of experience in the transnational RTDI cooperation programmes is the highest regarding participation in EU framework programmes, followed by bilateral S&T programmes COST, Erasmus+, and national unilaterally funded projects. Also, it is evident that respondents from Enlargement countries have the lowest levels of experience in almost all programme types compared to the respondents from other country groups.

Regarding the barriers related to the institutional support, the study suggests to institutions from Enlargement countries to:

“reorganise internal resources and do a better distribution of tasks within the institutions, so that work on international projects does not affect the ongoing activities within the organization and provide greater support to participants in international projects, particularly in project management and advisory in accounting.”

Activities for overcoming barriers such as information on IPR rules, language courses, project management trainings, participation in brokerage events etc. were identified by the study as well, however significantly less importance by the EU MSs and regions upstream the Danube was given to such activities compared to Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries.

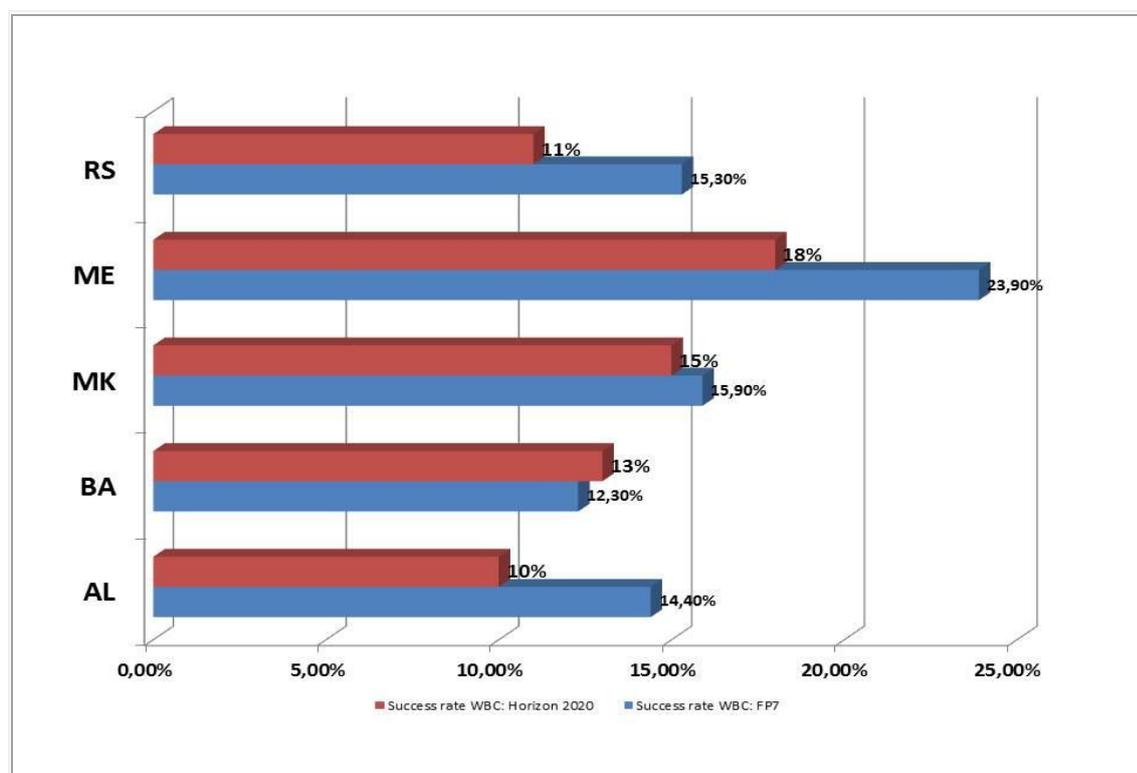
3 Participation in Framework programmes

During the SP in Budapest in July 2015, some preliminary results were presented (see the tables below) indicating a quite low success rate.

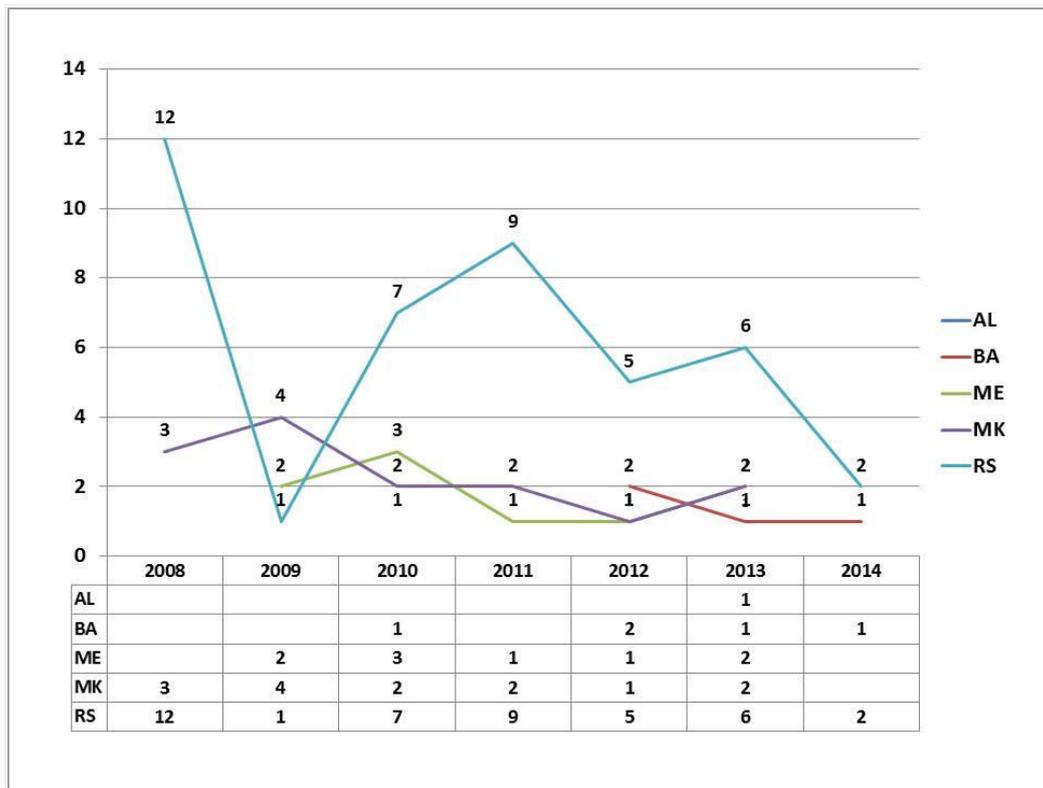
Horizon 2020 participation, preliminary results for WBC, July 2015					
	Eligible proposals	Retained proposals	Applicants in the eligible proposals	Retained applicants	Requested EU financial contribution to retained applicants (in €)
AL	41	4	59	6	167638
BA	51	7	63	9	759271
MK	128	20	158	21	1055495
KO*	9	2	12	3	71726
ME	35	6	40	8	215309
RS	486	52	681	78	9460823

*1 and 2 with at least one applicant in the selection

Compared with success rate in FP7 (as of October 2014), Bosnia and Herzegovina show higher success rates in Horizon 2020 (preliminary results) than in FP7, other countries have so far higher success rates in FP7.



Compared to other countries, Serbia is the most successful country in the region - both in Horizon 2020 and FP7 when it comes to the number of projects implemented. In FP7 Serbia coordinated 42 projects, FYR of Macedonia 14, Montenegro 9, Bosnia and Herzegovina 5 and Albania 1. Regarding Horizon 2020 Serbia has also some success to report such as the first ERC grant by University of Belgrade, while the University of Novi Sad received a grant under the first Teaming call.



Please check the calls section of the website to find potential funding opportunities as well as Theme in Focus to find further related information.