Do we need "perfect proposals"?
A different look at Horizon 2020

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Intro

- Personal background
  - Over 20 years in DG RTD
  - Head of Unit

    „Social sciences and humanities" (2000 – 2007)
    „Evaluation and monitoring" (2007 – 2014)
  - Retired since 2014
  - Publishing analytical comments on **peter-fisch.eu**
  - Not a consultant (and it shows...)
- The content of this presentation does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the views expressed therein lies entirely with the author ...

Overview

A different look at

- **Work Programmes**
- **Proposal submission**
- **Management Modes**
- **Public Consultations**
- **Consensus**

Work Programmes Central Role in Horizon 2020

- Central steering tool for Horizon 2020

- Official objective: Strategic priority setting

- De-facto objective: Stable success rates

- Drafting of Work Programmes is a lengthy and not very transparent process involving a great number of actors

- Horizon 2020 Work Programmes for 2016: 1800 pages (!)

- Final call texts do not necessarily convince applicants by their clarity and stringency

- Open competition between applications partially replaced by a (hidden) competition to get topics included in the Work Programme

Work Programmes
New in 2016: Scoping Papers

- Overarching document + 17 thematic scoping papers

- 160 pages …

- "Working document not formally endorsed by the Commission"

- Refers to the ongoing consultation process

- Outlines priorities and focus areas

- Highlights policy relevance

- Very useful within the current programming logic , but …

- … extra layer of "guidance" in an already very heavy process

Work Programmes
New in 2016: Scoping Papers

1.1. Current political context and the policy objectives to be supported (including the Juncker priorities and the 3 O's)

The headline goal of the 'Health, demographic change and well-being' societal challenge 1 (SC1) is better health and well-being for all. Its main policy objectives are in line with several Commission priorities and with the 3 O strategy (see table below). Beyond its importance for human well-being, health is also considered with its dimension of social policies and socio-economic convergence.

SC1 main policy objectives	Relevant Commission priorities	Relevant 3 O
To improve health and well-being outcomes	'A new boost for jobs, growth and investment'	Open innovation Open science
To promote active and healthy ageing		
To promote a more competitive European health industry and care sector		
To maximise the digital potential	'A connected Digital Single Market'	Open innovation Open science
To promote the EU as a global leader in the health area	'EU as a stronger global actor'	Open to the world Open science

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Work Programmes
A different look…

- Scoping Papers emphasize two different/conflicting aspects:
  - Bottom up: Listening to consultations

                            Advise from experts and stakeholders
  - Top down: President Juncker's "10 priorities"

                            Commissioner Moedas "3O's"
- Confirmation of the trend:
  - The real battle is not with proposals at the call stage, but with experts at the Work Programmes drafting stage
- Do we really understand what is going on?

Work Programmes
A radical alternative…

- "Strategic" top-down steering of topics

  to be replaced by bottom-up applications (like for the ERC)

- Ex-ante rationing through a limited number of „open" topics

  to be replaced by open competition

- Lower success rates (at least in the short run)

+ "Simplification 2.0"

+ Transparency instead of Lobbying

+ Chance for truly innovative and "disruptive" proposals

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Proposals Characteristics…

Scientific competition

- Originality, Creativity, Fresh approach
- "Other" issues play a minor role
- Proposals are very diverse

- *"Wow!"*

Horizon 2020 Calls

- More or less given content, limited scope for creativity
- "Other" issues highly relevant
- Proposals are rather similar

- *"OK…"*

Proposals
Towards "Perfect proposals" ...

- Scientific quality is essential, but score on "other" issues becomes decisive
    - Impact
    - Dissemination
    - Gender dimension
    - Data management
    - ...

- These issues are not the core compentence of most researchers, so there is a strong tendency to use external advise to "beef up" the proposals on these aspects

- *The aim is to "tick all boxes"*

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Proposals Consequences

+ "Perfect proposals" are better than the original ones

+ The winning proposals comply with all the requirements of the call text (Mark 15)

- External support is costly

- Quality of the consultant(s) might implicitly become as relevant as the quality of the research team

- Do "perfect proposals" lead to "perfect projects"?

- No rules to safeguard a fair competition

£8,300
Botox and fillers

£107,000
Eight nose jobs

£4,000
Chin implant

£7,000
Fillers to his arms

£7,000
Fat transfer to the bum

£6,000
Leg liposuction

£27,000
Hair transplant and graft

£11,000
Cervical face, eye, and neck lift

£10,000
Chest implants

£22,000
Fake six-pack

£7,000
Laser liposuction

£3,000
Calf shaping

THE HUMAN KEN DOLL: "MY QUEST FOR THE PERFECT BODY"

#ThisMorning

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Similar issues in other areas... (2)

Einsame Spitze

Dopingbelastung unter den schnellsten Sprintern der Geschichte

Dopingbelastung

Bestzeit

Nr. 1 Usain Bolt
- unbelastet
- 9,58 Sek.

Nr. 3 Yohan Blake
- drei Monate Sperre (2009)
- 9,69 Sek.

Nr. 4 Asafa Powell
- positive A-Probe (2013)
- 9,72 Sek.

Nr. 7 Maurice Greene
- vor Gericht belastet (nicht gesperrt)
- 9,78 Sek.

Nr. 8 Justin Gatlin
- zweimal gesperrt (2001/06)
- 9,79 Sek.

Nr. 9 Steve Mullings
- lebenslang gesperrt (2011)
- 9,80 Sek.

Nr. 5 Tim Montgomery
- zwei Jahre Sperre (2005)
- 9,78 Sek.

Nr. 2 Tyson Gay
- positive A-Probe (2013)
- 9,69 Sek.

Nr. 6 Nesta Carter
- positive A-Probe* (2013)
- 9,78 Sek.

Nr. 10 Ben Johnson
- lebenslang gesperrt (1988/93)
- 9,83 Sek.

*unbestätigt   Quelle: SID

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Proposals
A different look…

- General use of consultants is an expensive "zero sum game" with only marginal gains (except for the consultants …)

- Selection process is based on the evaluation of proposals as best proxy for the expected quality of projects…

- But do evaluators judge on the quality of the consortium – or rather on the quality of external support?

- There is a need for an open debate on how to organise this process in a fair and "clean" way …

- *A suggestion for a first step: Requirement to indicate in the proposal documents external support and consultancy work*

Management modes
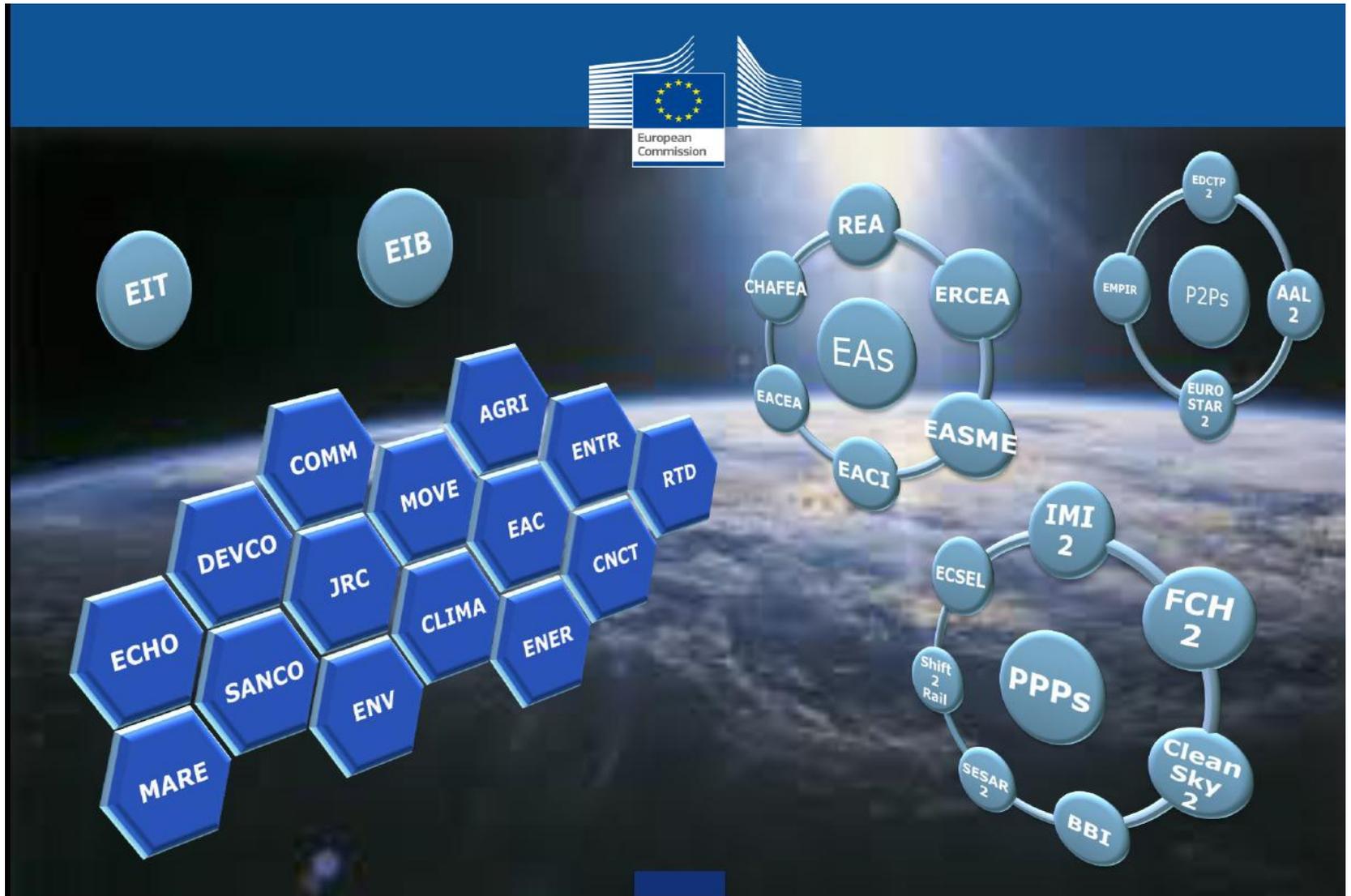
Management modes

- Management structure of a FP has never been so complex than under Horizon 2020

- 25% of budget to be managed by the Commission

- 75% of budget to be managed externally
  - 55%   Executive Agencies (REA, ERCEA, …)
  - 12 %   PPPs and P2Ps
  - 4%   EIB
  - 4%   EIT

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Management Modes
Governance

+ Specific organisations for specific tasks

+ Possibility to implement different management models (shared responsibility)

But:

- Overall command structures not made explicit

- Coordination work mainly through "ad hoc" and "informal" working groups without formal responsibility

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Management Modes Stratification

- FPs always avoided longer term commitments to remain flexible

- Basic principle: Project support instead of institutional funding

- Creation of dedicated organisations for specific tasks puts flexibility at risk

- Activities with their "own" institution will be better off in the longer run, as the institution will fight hard for its survival

- FP track record on closing down institutions is rather poor
  - "Research Fund for Coal and Steel" still alive … (*1951)
  - As far as I know: Last Institution closed was INTAS … († 2006)

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Management Modes
A different look …

- Ever increasing number of actors in the FP makes a coherent overall management more and more difficult

- Clear attribution of responsibilities is crucial

- Percentage of FP funding which is "free" and not ring-fenced for specific activities is steadily decreasing

- FP as a "level playing field" is at risk, as topics "protected" through a specific institution might have a major advantage

Public Consultations
The concept

- Part of the "Better regulation" agenda
  "… about designing and evaluating EU policies and laws transparently, with evidence, and backed up by the views of citizens and stakeholders. It covers all policy areas and aims for targeted regulation that goes no further than required, in order to achieve objectives and bring benefits at minimum cost"

- Use of online questionnaires to create equal access for everyone

- Strategy to overcome the "democratic deficit" in European policy making

Public Consultations Some facts

- General use across all Commission services

- Around 30 consultations "open" right now, covering virtually all fields of European policy

- DG RTD:

  - 1 consultation "open" (Interim Evaluation PPPs)

  - 13 consultations "closed" since 2014

    https://ec.europa.eu/research/consultations/index.cfm?pg=list

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Public Consultations Some figures

| Public Consultation	Deadline	Responses	Papers
Interim Evaluation Joint Undertakings	10.03.2017	?	?
Interim Evaluation Horizon 2020	15.01.2017	(> 3000)	295
Euratom	15.01.2017	?	?
EDCTP2 Clinical Trials	15.11.2016	?	?
JP Metrology EMPR and EMPIR	07.10.2016	250	-
WP 2018-20 Food	28.08.2016	?	?
WP 2018-20 Science with and for society	04.07.2016	94	
Strategy for an Energy Union	31.05.2016	243	
PRIMA	24.04.2016	562	
Ex-Post Evaluation FP7	22.05.2015	202	
Earth Observation	20.04.2015	326	
WP 2016-17 Science with and for Society	12.10.2014	165	
Science 2.0	30.09.2014	498	27

Public Consultations Biased views...?

A.7. What aspect of metrology are you/is your organisation involved in?
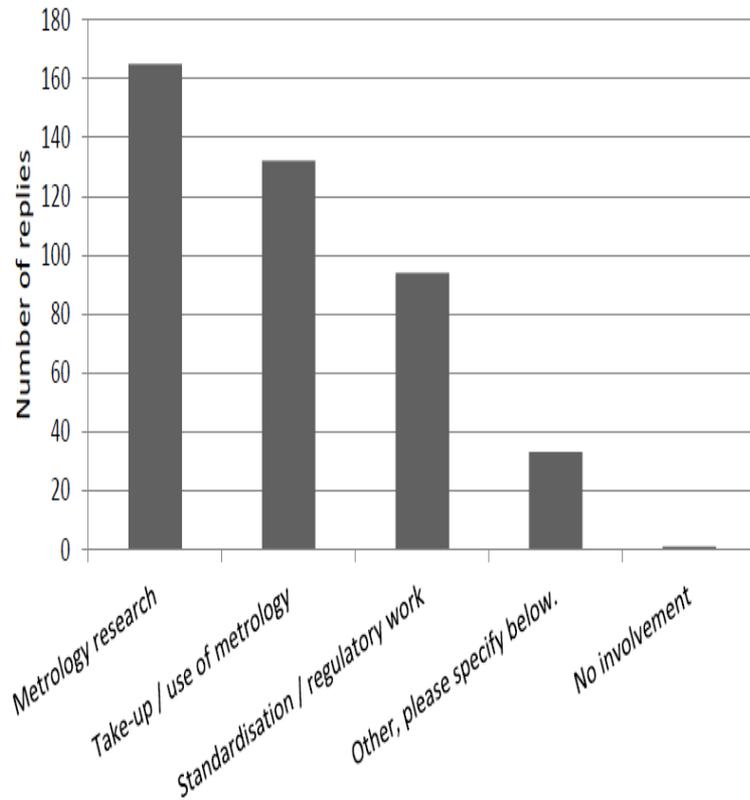
E.1. Would you be in favour of future European-wide research programmes in metrology?

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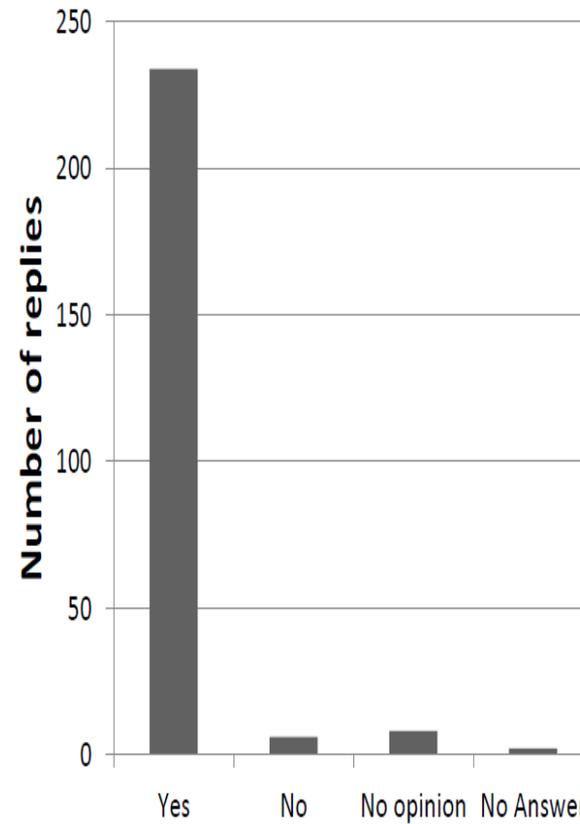
Public Consultations
Difficult questions...?

9. Do you think that Horizon 2020 is helping to:

	Not at all	To some extent	To large extent	Fully	I don't know
*Build a society and an economy based on knowledge and innovation.	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
*Implement the "Europe 2020" strategy, the EU's strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
*Develop and implementing EU policies.	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
*Support the development of the European Research Area, a unified area open to the world, in which scientific knowledge, technology and researchers circulate freely.	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
*Foster excellent science.	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
*Boost industrial leadership.	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
*Improve the lifelong health and well-being of all.	◉	◉	◉	◉	◉
*Secure sufficient supplies of					

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Public Consultations Some reflections

- Public consultations are a fantastic tool to involve wider audiences in the policy shaping process

- Current practice reveals serious problems:
  - Participation rates remain (very) low
  - Participation strongly biased towards beneficiaries
  - Questionnaires raise complex questions
  - No incentive for "normal" citizens

- Hen and egg ...
  - Policy development based on consultation results?
  - Consultation design based on policy priorities?

Public Consultations
A different look …

- Difficult to accept public consultations as a kind of democratic legitimation

- Public consultations today are an efficient way to organise a "transparent lobbying process"

- Need to develop new incentives for a broader participation

- European policies are in need of more serious interaction with the citizens – and public consultations are so far the best tool we have …

- Time for a "consultation on consultations" …

Consensus
A "paradoxon"?

- Research
  - is controversial and conflictual
  - is a driver of continuous change
- Innovation
  - is based on "constructive destruction"
  - is disruptive with established processes and products
- Europe
  - is in the middle of a fierce political debate
  - is questioning the established routines
- ➢ European Research and Innovation Policy should trigger vibrant political controversies

Consensus
Burning issues

Controversial issues in European Research Policy:

Consensus
Burning issues?

Controversial issues in European Research Policy:

- …

- New funding rules for Romanian researchers

- Low success rates

- Integration of SSH in mainstream Horizon 2020

- Technology Readiness Levels

- …

Consensus

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Consensus
Living in perfect harmony?

- There is no public debate on European Research Policy

- All actors seem to agree on almost everything

- No controversy on any major issue since many years …

- Harmony

- Consensus

- Agreement

- But is European research policy really that boring?

Consensus
Some ideas for controversy…

- Relation between Research Policy and Innovation Policy

- Importance of short term economic impact against long term scientific development

- Policy driven annual programming (top down) versus curiosity driven open calls (bottom up)

- An "EU" Programme or the nucleus of a global funding platform

- Is "Excellence" really the only valid criterion?

- …

Consensus
A different look …

- Research and Innovation cannot flourish in an environment based of consensus and unanimity

- Streamlined programmes will not generate disruptive invention

- Dissenting views are urgently needed to spell out the issues at stake

- Commission colleagues do a great job …

- … but they need honest feedback more than tactical alignment

- Please feel encouraged to make your voice heard in a frank and open debate

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? !