

## news

# EU talks suggest Horizon 2020 cash cut to €70bn or less

Negotiators have further reduced the expected allocation for the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme in the 2014-20 European Union budget, during inconclusive budget talks in Brussels.

The talks revolved around a compromise proposal that would reduce spending on Horizon 2020 from the €80 billion (£65bn) proposed by the European Commission in 2011 to about €70bn. And the dynamic of the negotiations points to a final settlement no higher—and possibly lower—than that.

European heads of state failed to reach an agreement on the wider EU budget over two days of negotiations on November 22 and 23.

In a document released before the summit, the European Council representing the 27 member states had indicated it might protect spending on competitiveness, including Horizon 2020, in favour of greater reductions in the Commission's proposals for the two largest budget areas: cohesion and agriculture.

But after bilateral discussions with all 27 heads of state in Brussels on 22 November, the president of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy released an updated proposal that reallocated money from competitiveness programmes contained in subheading 1a—including Horizon 2020—into funds for cohesion and agriculture.

That means the settlement now being discussed for 1a

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stands at €139.5bn—€24.7bn less than the Commission's original proposal. While the Council has not indicated how much it would allocate to Horizon 2020, these figures place Horizon 2020's budget at €70.8bn, if other areas of competitiveness spending are all adjusted at the same rate.

The latest Council proposal also specifies reductions to the Commission's allocation for the Connecting Europe Facility, which would build energy, transport and ICT infrastructure, the Galileo satellite system and the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security programme.

Significant disagreements remain over the proposal for the entire EU budget. The proposal put forward by Van Rompuy is around €80bn less than the Commission's. Northern European countries, including the UK and Germany, are insisting this total be further reduced before an agreement can be reached.

Despite failing to find a compromise at the first round of discussions, both David Cameron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel said they were confident an agreement between all 27 countries will be reached when leaders reconvene in early 2013 to resume negotiations.

## Last-minute scramble on animal legislation

Managers of animal research units face a rush to comply with new regulations governing the use of animals in their work. The rules take effect on 1 January but research institutes only received details of the changes they must make from the Home Office on 13 November.

"It's all very short notice," says Barbara Mortimer, director of the services unit at the University of Bristol. "We're running very close to the wire." Paul Flecknell, a vet who is responsible for the management of Newcastle University's animal research facilities, says he was "not impressed" with the "very tight timeframe". Managers who need to make certain changes must send details to the Home Office by 30 November.

The draft bill implementing the changes to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to include the European rules, was originally scheduled to go before parliament in May but was not published until 2 November. Then it suffered a further two-week delay.

From 1 January, UK institutes using animals will need to have appointed people to three new roles: an infor-

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mation officer, a compliance officer and a training and competence officer, although these roles can be assigned to existing staff members.

Some facilities managers are buying in databases to maintain records to comply with other requirements on recording the competencies of individual staff members working with animals. Imperial College London has budgeted £150,000 for this, while Newcastle, Oxford and Cambridge are also said to be considering building or buying software. But Fraser Darling, biological services manager at Queen Mary, University of London, says that a simple spreadsheet is sufficient. "This is a great opportunity to sell software that people don't want," he says.

Other changes to the rules include requiring staff to undertake additional training modules with an emphasis on ethics; the designation of cephalopod species as protected; and the requirement of a licence for breeders and suppliers of frogs and zebrafish.