

UKRO Factsheet on Associated Countries in Horizon 2020

What are the Associated Countries?

Associated Countries are non-EU countries that pay into the Horizon 2020 budget in order to be treated equally to the EU Member States for the purposes of the programme. Legal entities from Associated Countries can participate in Horizon 2020 under the same conditions as their EU counterparts.

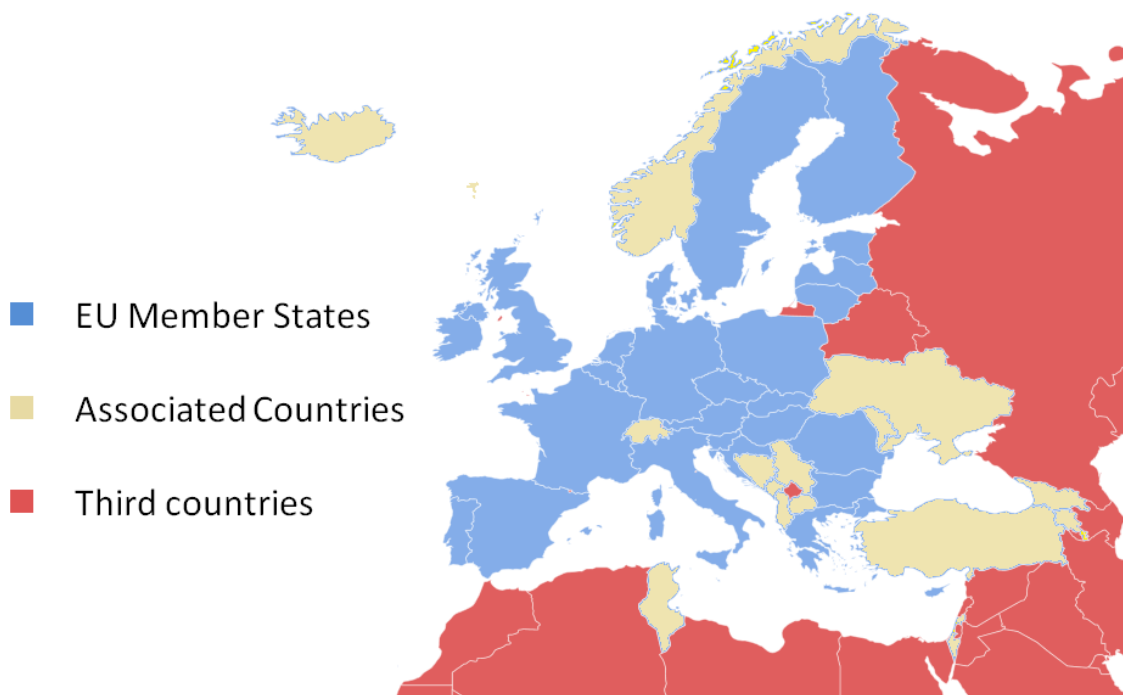
What countries can be associated to Horizon 2020?

Association to Horizon 2020 is open to selected groups of non-EU Members States mentioned in Article 7 of the Horizon 2020 **Regulation of Establishment**. These groups include the following:

- Acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates (e.g. Serbia or Turkey);
- European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members, or countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy that fulfil specific criteria (e.g. Norway or Tunisia); and
- Countries or territories previously associated to the Seventh Framework Programme (e.g. the Faroe Islands).

At present, the following countries are associated to Horizon 2020:

Iceland	Albania
Norway	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Israel	North Macedonia
Turkey	Montenegro
Switzerland	Serbia
The Faroe Islands	Tunisia
Ukraine	Georgia
Moldova	Armenia



How do third countries become associated to Horizon 2020?

The decision to start negotiations on association to Horizon 2020 is made by the European Commission and the discussions take into account the wider political relations between the EU and the country seeking to be associated. Furthermore, the Commission also takes into account the country's capacity in science, technology and innovation, as well as its dealing with IPR when making a decision on starting talks on potential association.

Association to Horizon 2020 takes place through the conclusion of an international agreement. Each Horizon 2020 association agreement is different, depending on the level of political and economic integration of the country in question with the EU. The agreements can include different provisions, depending on whether the third country is a EFTA member (e.g. Norway or Iceland), a country covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy with a wider Association Agreement in place (e.g. Israel or Tunisia), or a country formerly associated to Horizon 2020 without a broader Association Agreement with the EU (e.g. the Faroe Islands).

For example, the participation of Norway and Iceland in EU programmes is part of their integration with the wider EU Single Market and guaranteed by the **European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement** in exchange for making financial contributions to the EU programmes' budget. Therefore, these countries do not sign a freestanding agreement for Horizon 2020 like, for example, the Faroe Islands would, but simply add a relevant protocol to the existing EEA Agreement. Switzerland is not part of the EEA, but has a number of separate agreements with the EU, covering similar areas to those of the EEA Agreement, including agriculture, trade and free movement of people. Therefore, Switzerland still requires a separate agreement to ensure its association to Horizon 2020, which is very closely linked to the other agreements.

Other countries seeking association to Horizon 2020 might already have broader Association Agreements in place, which could encompass a number of areas, including trade, cultural relations and co-operation in S&T. If some provisions concerning the participation of a third country in EU framework programmes for research and innovation are included in the wider Association Agreement, then the Horizon 2020 agreement might be very succinct and simply officially confirm the association. If this is not the case, the third country's association agreement will need to include the relevant wider provisions for its participation in the programme, for example on the calculation of the country's financial contribution to the programme, on the free movement of research workers participating in the activities covered by such agreement and on cross-border movement of goods intended for use in research activities.

The particular case of Switzerland

Following a 2014 referendum, in which Swiss citizens voted to limit immigration from the EU to the Alpine country and to impose restrictions on the free movement of Croatian nationals, Switzerland's association was limited in scope (Pillar 1, Spreading Excellence, Euratom and ITER), and time (from 15 September 2014 until 31 December 2016). Consequently, Switzerland had the status of a third country in Pillar 2 (Industrial Leadership) and Pillar 3 (Societal Challenges) of Horizon 2020 and Swiss legal entities were not automatically eligible to receive EU funding from those parts of the programme.

Following the ratification of the so-called 'Croatia Protocol' in December 2016, Switzerland regained its full association to Horizon 2020 on 1 January 2017 and Swiss organisations participating in future projects funded under any part of the programme will be able to automatically receive EU funding and will count towards the minimum number of partners required for eligible consortia.

However, since the agreement does not envisage retroactive application, the status of Swiss organisations in on-going projects, funded under those parts of Horizon 2020 to which Switzerland was not associated temporarily from 15 September 2014, remains unchanged.

What can influence the association process?

Negotiations on the association to EU framework programmes are integrated into wider political discussions, and generally form part of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy and its wider strategy to become a global actor. Interrelationship with wider political agendas were seen during the Switzerland,

Israel, Tunisia, Georgia and Ukraine negotiations to associate to Horizon 2020. For example, Israel's association to Horizon 2020 was only possible when the Commission and Israel reached an agreement on the exclusion of some entities based in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 from receiving Horizon 2020 funds, in accordance with the EU's guidelines on this matter. Switzerland on the other hand was only allowed to become fully associated to the programme, when the issues concerning the free movement of EU nationals to the Alpine country were resolved at the end of 2016.

Consequently, there are a number of factors that can impact on the speed of the negotiations, including the wider discussions on trade, free movement of people, security and respect for European values. It can also be influenced by potentially unrelated significant political events in other countries, which the Commission might consider a political priority, thus making a decision to delay the association talks with the applicant country.

Early information on association policy in Horizon Europe

Following the Interim Evaluation of Horizon 2020, the High Level Group on Maximising Impact of EU Research and Innovation Programmes recommended in its "**LAB – FAB – APP: Investing in the European future we want**" report that association to Horizon Europe (formerly known as FP9) be open to non-European third countries with a similar level of research excellence, such as Canada or Australia.

The European Commission's **proposal** for Horizon Europe, published in June 2018, took this recommendation into account, effectively leaving the association open to any country in the world. Apart from the same categories of countries that were allowed to be associated to Horizon 2020 (EFTA members, candidates for EU membership, or countries covered by the EU Neighbourhood Policy), Article 12 of the proposed Horizon Europe Regulation also mentions **any** third countries and territories that fulfil specific criteria (i.e. good capacity in R&I, etc.).

The rules governing the association of such third countries to the new programme are likely to differ from those seen in Horizon 2020 (e.g. financial contribution to the programme's budget calculated in a different way, etc.) and their final version will be known once the proposal is discussed by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers during 2019.

More information on Associated Countries:

- European Commission's Horizon 2020 website:
ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020
- List of Associated Countries:
ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/3cpart/h2020-hi-list-ac_en.pdf
- International Co-operation section in the Horizon 2020 Online Manual:
ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/international-cooperation_en.htm
- UKRO Portal (sponsor or subscriber access required): ukro.ac.uk

Examples of Horizon 2020 association agreements, which can be found on EU websites:

- Protocol 31 to the EEA Agreement associating Norway and Iceland to Horizon 2020:
efta.int/media/documents/legal-texts/eea/the-eea-agreement/Protocols%20to%20the%20Agreement/protocol31.pdf
- Israel's Association Agreement to Horizon 2020:
[eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0617\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22014A0617(01)&from=EN)
- Switzerland's Association Agreement to Horizon 2020, Euratom and ITER:
[eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22015X1028\(01\)&qid=1467893720984&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22015X1028(01)&qid=1467893720984&from=EN)
- The Faroe Islands' Association Agreement to Horizon 2020
eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22015A0211%2801%29&from=EN