

UKRO Horizon 2020

The Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and Horizon 2020

What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

In September 2015, the United Nations adopted a set of ambitious goals to tackle poverty, safeguard the planet and guarantee the wellbeing of all. This overarching mission, which built upon the Millennium Development Goals, has been translated into 17 concrete Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



Source: *United Nations [website](#)*

Though the goals were set by global leaders, the principle behind the SDGs is that everyone can and should contribute to achieving them, including national governments, the private sector and civil society. The European Union has equally made a significant contribution to the development of the SDGs, seeing them as a high priority and is seeking to align its actions and initiatives to support them, through their integration in the EU Framework Programmes, for example.

The relevance of the SDGs to Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 is considered by the Commission as a 'common ground for engaging all countries and different partners in the implementation of a universal and transformational agenda'

H2020 promotes sustainability in Europe and globally and has an overall target of 60% expenditure commitment to Sustainable Development and 35% to Climate. In addition to the formal targets, the emphasis on 'International Cooperation' and *openness to the world* is an opportunity for increased international R&I cooperation in support of the SDGs.

In the introduction to the 2018-2020 Work Programme, the SDGs are not only mentioned as a priority for the EU, significant investment in research and innovation in support of the SDGs' implementation is also highlighted. As a result, the SDGs are explicitly mentioned within the topic description of many 2018-2020 funding opportunities. Many areas of Horizon 2020 support specific SDGs directly and a brief outline of relevant work programme parts is as follows:

2018-2020 Work Programme Part	Relevant SDG
Nanotechnologies, Advanced Materials, Biotechnology and Advanced Manufacturing and Processing (NMBP)	     
Space	No specific SDG mention, but contributes to both climate action and sustainable development.
ICT	
Societal Challenge 1 – Health	  
Societal Challenge 2 – Food Security	          
Societal Challenge 3 – Energy	  
Societal Challenge 4 - Transport	 
Societal Challenge 5 – Climate Action	        
Societal Challenge 6 – Europe in a Changing World	Calls and topics support the SDGs, as highlighted through their respective expected impacts.
Societal Challenge 7 – Secure Societies	 

Integrating the SDGs into proposals

Many topics within the 2018-2020 Work Programme make specific mention to one or more of the SDGs in the 'Expected Impact' section. Where this is the case, applicants should inform themselves of the relevant SDG(s), its main aims, and where some or all will be met by the proposed project.

Participants should integrate both a description and concrete measures as to how the project will address the SDG in question.

Where SDGs are not mentioned in the 'Specific Challenge' of the topic or the 'Expected Impact' section, it is advisable that applicants have a broad understanding of them and, where relevant, integrate them into proposals, clearly stating how the objectives of the project contribute to the aims of the SDGs. Aligning a proposal with EU priorities in this way will likely increase the chances of a positive evaluation, particularly in terms of the 'Impact' award criteria as above.

Next steps for a sustainable European future – The 2030 Agenda

The overall adoption and implementation of the SDGs by the EU is governed by the strategic framework for action, referred to as 'the 2030 agenda' in its communication on the next steps for a sustainable European future, the EC fully committed to be a frontrunner in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, together with its Member States, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. In practice, the EC has launched a number of activities to support this:

- Mapping existing internal and external policies in support of the SDGs;
- Reporting and monitoring on the SDGs;
- Proposing an update of the Consensus on Development;
- Setting up a high-level Stakeholders' Platform and a Sustainability Award.

The multi-stakeholder platform (see link below) is a particularly effective tool for individual organisations or academics who are interested in which specific groups and stakeholders are feeding-in to EU policy on sustainable development. The activities of the group will inform the design of the various work-programmes and the orientation of the calls in key areas.

Those individual researchers and organisations interested in how individual member states are performing against the SDGs can access the various data and statistic packages available, and provide an opportunity to identify objectives within project proposals that will address the shortcomings in performance. Applicants will benefit from identifying which stakeholder groups are contributing to the policy discussions in the specific areas of each SDG as well as making explicit reference to the performance of their participant countries.

What is the 'Paris' Agreement?

At the Paris climate conference (COP21) in December 2015, 195 countries adopted the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal. The agreement sets out a global action plan to avoid climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C.

Governments agreed:

- I. a long-term goal of keeping the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels;
- II. to aim to limit the increase to 1.5°C
- III. on the need for global emissions to peak as soon as possible, recognising that this will take longer for developing countries;
- IV. to undertake rapid reductions in accordance with the best available science.
- V. to come together every 5 years to set more ambitious targets as required;
- VI. to report on how well they are doing to implement their targets;
- VII. to track progress towards the long-term goal;
- VIII. to strengthen societies' ability to deal with the impacts of climate change;
- IX. to provide enhanced international support for adaptation to developing countries.

- X. avert, minimise and address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change; and
- XI. to acknowledge the need to cooperate and provide support in different areas such as early warning systems, emergency preparedness and risk insurance.

In the context of Horizon 2020, support to the agreement comes from those calls that fall in the new 'Low Carbon' focus area in the last work programme for 2018-20. As explained on the H2020 Participant Portal:

*'The focus area **'Building a low-carbon, climate resilient future'** will align R&I investments towards the climate change targets of the Paris Agreement, which marked the beginning of a new era in the fight against climate change... This focus area reflects the fact that research and innovation is essential to find the ground-breaking solutions needed, including in particular in the energy system. It aims to develop solutions for achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience of Europe in the second half of the century.'*

The main areas of H2020 identified under this new focus area are:

1. **Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies (LEIT) – Nanotechnology, Advanced Materials, Biotechnology & Advanced Manufacturing & Processing**
2. **Leadership in Enabling and Industrial Technologies (LEIT) - SPACE**
3. **Societal Challenge 2 - Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine and maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy.**
4. **Societal Challenge 3 - Secure, Clean and Efficient Energy**
5. **Societal Challenge 4 - Smart Green and Integrated Transport**
6. **Societal Challenge 5 - Climate Action, Environment, Resource Efficiency and Raw Materials**

A dedicated **search function** has been included on the H2020 Participant Portal to provide an overview of each Focus Area or 'virtual call'. There are currently 123 calls included under the low-carbon focus area and applicants to these should explicitly reference the Paris Agreement in the impact section of their proposals.

More information:

- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
- Introduction to the 2018-2020 Horizon 2020 Work Programme
ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2018-2020/main/h2020-wp1820-intro_en.pdf
- Sign up to the UKRO Portal to stay up to date on Horizon 2020 general developments, calls, events and results: ukro.ac.uk
- Paris Climate Conference (COP 21)- www.cop21paris.org/about/cop21
- DG RTD Low Carbon Research and Innovation Report -
ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/sites/horizon2020/files/lc_booklet.pdf
- Low-carbon focus area topics/calls on the participant portal -
ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/focus-area/low_carbon.html#c.topics=focusArea/s/LC/1/1&+callStatus/asc
- Euro Stats package on the SDGs and their progress -
ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/overview
- Next steps for a sustainable European future-
ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication-next-steps-sustainable-europe-20161122_en.pdf
- Multi-stakeholder platform on SDGs-
ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/global-topics/sustainable-development-goals/multi-stakeholder-platform-sdgs_en