

Executive summary

The aim of the report 'Positioning Swiss UAS in the European research and innovation landscape' is to examine what opportunities Horizon 2020 offers to realise the institutional strategy of Swiss UAS. The report tries to clarify the role of (Swiss) UAS in the European research and innovation landscape. The actual problem seems to be that although Horizon 2020 is ideal for applied research institutions given the fact that it covers the full research and innovation cycle, UAS in fact still lag behind in their participation. Horizon 2020 in general suits the needs of UAS with their strong focus on innovation and applied research. Swiss UAS participate well in the European Framework Programmes in comparison to other UAS, however compared to overall Swiss participation, they still need to step up their efforts. The report examines what the gaps, obstacles and opportunities are and if the programme is not structured to their needs or if it is rather an institutional problem. The information was gathered on the basis of interviews, desk research, and validation of information within a thematic workshop.

The **gaps and obstacles** exist at **European, national/cantonal and institutional level**. On **European** level the general presence of UAS in the European framework programme for research and innovation Horizon 2020 are considerably low despite a rather strong focus on applied science. It also needs to be stated that Horizon 2020 is a complex landscape for newcomers. Currently, a specific UAS instrument within Horizon 2020 is lacking which could fit the needs of UAS specifically, thereby raising their participation. The UAS namely have a unique position in delivering applied research and innovation on the one hand and to act as an important link between Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and industry, traditional universities, societal organisations and Vocational education and training (VET) and other educational institutions in the region on the other hand. On a **national and/or cantonal** level different levels of autonomy in terms of funding, hiring procedures of research staff and leadership could be detected, as different cantons are financing the seven public UAS. Moreover it was stated on several occasions that the awareness and perception of the role in society and politics could be improved to increase visibility of the UAS. The main gaps were discovered on the **institutional** level itself, where it needs to be pointed out that public UAS in Switzerland have different levels and starting points to realise their international strategy, if available.

- The first of four gaps in this area is therefore the **incentive** for researchers and whole institutions **to engage internationally**. Due to plenty of collaborations in the local and regional area, an international focus might not be available or deemed needed.
- Moreover, in some instances **an international strategy or at least an EU focus, a common roadmap with the definition of individual focus points** per area or department or simply the in depth thought about own strengths is missing.
- In the cases where the will of international collaboration is already very prominent and researchers are active in applying for European funding projects, there is a clear **need for additional administrative resources**, as was mentioned by all interviewed UAS. This specifically involves tracking calls for whole institutions or single departments, working closely with researchers and becoming an expert in writing applications. Even though Euresearch is well established in supporting UAS, researchers have difficulties to cope with the burden of administrative workload involved in applying to possible funding projects.

- Lastly, efforts is needed in **networking**, in establishing **contacts** in the specific research areas of a UAS and in acquiring simple **lobbying knowledge**. Information and insights on how to lobby for own causes is only marginally available within the institutions themselves. The problematic side effect of this is that agenda setting and networking access is not possible or available. Having connections and contacts are evidently needed to collect the know-how from different angles.

The main conclusion to draw is that Horizon 2020 does offer various opportunities, however there are no specific funding instruments for UAS within Europe and Horizon 2020. Nevertheless, there are other suitable options for applied focused research that are open to UAS and their research activity, mainly within pillar two (Industrial Leadership) and three (Societal Challenges) of Horizon 2020. Horizon 2020 is very competitive and represents an excellent way to collaborate outside Switzerland in the applied research area.

From the report it follows that Horizon 2020 provides the UAS a framework for funding opportunities, but also allows for networking, collaboration and agenda-setting. The funding opportunities of Horizon 2020 generally suit the interests of the Swiss UAS, as they have a strong focus on collaborations with the industry and SMEs and conduct innovative applied research in their field on regional, national but also international level through cooperation with partners. Nevertheless, Swiss UAS still have a way to go to uncover their big 'sleeping' potential. The report therefore puts forward the following recommendations:

- UAS need to have a **certain level of autonomy**, meaning that they can decide within the board how to invest their budget, how to position themselves and who to hire.
- To have a strong and successful European presence a **concrete strategy or at least a vision linked to EU opportunities should be set**.
- **UAS could hire dedicated in-house staff mainly focusing on international collaboration**, tracking calls for whole institutions or single departments, working closely with researchers and becoming experts in writing applications.
- UAS should develop their **networking & lobbying activities**.
- A different **funding solution** would help to increase the activity in **applied research** and create a motivation instrument to be more active in the field of research.

To conclude, Horizon 2020 does seem to suit the needs of the UAS however, on an institutional level, the biggest challenges lay ahead.

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