

Ukraine joins flagship European research programme

Horizon 2020 agreement is part of a European Union effort to strengthen ties between Ukraine and the West.

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Genya Savilov/European Union

European science commissioner Carlos Moedas (left) and Ukraine's education minister Serhiy Kvit signed an agreement that promotes Ukraine to 'associate member' of the European Horizon 2020 research-funding programme.

Scientifically speaking, Ukraine is now a step closer to the European Union, and a little bit further away from Russia.

On 20 March in Kiev, Ukraine's Minister of Education and Science, Serhiy Kvit, and Carlos Moedas, the European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, signed an agreement that will allow Ukrainian scientists and businesses to fully participate in Horizon 2020 (H2020), the European Union's flagship research programme. H2020 is scheduled to distribute a total of €80 billion (US\$87 billion) of science funding between 2014 and 2020.

Since Russia's annexation one year ago of the Crimea peninsula, the European Union (EU) has been committed to strengthening ties between Ukraine and the West, and to supporting economic and political reforms in the former Soviet republic. H2020 is the first formal EU

programme in which Ukraine has chosen to participate as part of that effort.

Until now, Ukraine's status in H2020 was that of a 'third country', the same as Russia and the loosest possible relationship with limited rights.

Assuming the Ukrainian parliament approves the agreement, Ukraine will be promoted to an 'associated country', eligible to participate in any H2020 venture, and the closest possible affiliation with the programme for a non-EU country. Norway, Turkey and Israel, among others, are already associated countries.

The agreement also means that recipients of prestigious European Research Council (ERC) grants will in future be able to conduct their research at Ukrainian host institutions.

"Ukraine will now have access to the full spectrum of activities funded under Horizon 2020," said Moedas, on announcing the agreement. "I hope Ukraine will make the most of these opportunities."

The move could be a boost to the country's struggling science system. Once Ukraine pays a lump sum into H2020, individual scientists, research institutions and enterprises will be able to compete for funding on equal terms with EU member states. Any Ukrainian projects will be subject to peer review and to tight financial control if they get funded. Western-orientated Ukrainian scientists have [previously expressed concern about the country's current system](#), which is rooted in Soviet traditions with basic research flowing through a single academy, where decisions are often opaque.

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