Horizon 2020 Interim Evaluation:
University of Oslo Position Statement

The University of Oslo strongly supports Horizon 2020 and its contributions to excellent frontier and curiosity-driven research. Even more, we support H2020 because we believe in the general knowledge, cooperation and openness that H2020 inspire and build upon, which continuously contribute to define our overall strategic objectives and goals in synergy with the needs of European society.

Therefore, the University of Oslo highly appreciates the inclusive and open dialogue with the European Commission on the Horizon 2020 Interim Evaluation.

The University of Oslo would like to convey the following areas of opportunities and concern:

- **Excellence should be the key principle** of all parts of the Framework Programme. The H2020 programmes related to excellent frontier and curiosity-driven research, and in particular those linked to excellent basic research, mobility and research infrastructures, have proved to be extremely important tools for the research communities, and should be safeguarded and encouraged in H2020 as well as for new Framework Programmes.

- **Development and implementation of the European Research Area** should be the ambitious and sought after objective, and H2020 is the most important instrument to realise this. **Collaborative research** is the main instrument for supporting continued and strengthened integration and for ensuring the **EU-added value of research**. The development of ERA should be a continuous process, and H2020 should enable all stakeholders to take part in the efforts to create integration and synergies and thereby implement the strategic priorities of ERA.

- It is vital to strike the right **balance between research and innovation** in H2020 to prevent the gap from growing wider, as the focus on innovation is intensified during H2020. This demands a better complementarity and coordination between the three pillars of H2020. We are concerned about further rotation towards close-to-market innovation and commercialization at the expense of basic and applied research. More funding should be allocated to collaborative research projects at nominally **low Technology Readiness Levels** to ensure research opportunities early in the innovation pipeline. Major technological breakthroughs and the majority of disruptive innovations, including solutions to the great societal challenges, cannot always be planned, and will in many cases be fundamentally bound to frontier research.

- The **integration of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)** is a basic requirement to ensure sustainable solutions to societal challenges. Although better integrated in H2020, there is still

a need to enable, and even formalise, greater inclusion of SSH in all research and innovation activities. When defining societal challenges in the future, the perspectives and analytical strengths in the disciplines of social sciences and humanities should be taken into greater account. Topics suitable both for SSH inclusion and SSH lead should be clearly identified, the concepts of impact and innovation broadened in order to include the SSH perspectives in a sustainable way.

- Horizon 2020 needs **sufficient and sustainable funding** to be able to implement its strategic priorities and ambitions, as well as support the research communities' participation. It is therefore essential to safeguard and strengthen the grant-based budget dedicated to science throughout existing and upcoming Framework Programmes.

- **EU actions should play a role that cannot be played at a national level**, and EU funding should create additional incentives for national governments to increase the general investment in research and innovation. The Framework Programme should foster international competition and collaborative research. However, given the limitations EU-funding, the potential for **better synergies with national and regional funding** is an arena to be further developed. Through Horizon 2020, Europe has steadily dismantled barriers and increased mobility in academia. We now risk that Brexit may set back the clock, and therefore call for dedicated support to ensure and strengthen collaboration within and beyond Europe.

- **Closing the divide within Europe** due to differences in research and innovation capacity is of great concern for the continued development of the research communities as well as ERA, and appropriate measures should be developed to address this situation. The use of Twinning and Teaming initiatives, as well as dedicated use of structural funds, towards capacity building within research and education, should be developed further together with other initiatives.

- We appreciate the **simplification measures** introduced in H2020, especially the introduction of the participant portal and its integrated use for programme navigation, as well as the harmonisation of funding models and regulations. However, further streamlining and simplification of the Framework Programme must be a continuous process, and should be **based on trust** between the Commission and the research community, with appropriate levels of verification when required.

- H2020 has been characterised by an increasing number of applications and decreasing success rates. In combination with the complexity of the instruments, this may soon turn out to be a threat to the research community's interest in EU funded actions. The **oversubscription** needs to be addressed properly, looking at both call topics and application procedures. More use of two stage procedures, improving the quality of evaluation procedures, clarifying the concept of impact and interdisciplinarity in relation to the specific call, could be possible measures.