

Call for widely spread Horizon Europe call deadlines respecting ERA engagements towards research managers

Joint statement dated 10 June 2025

Universities represented by CESAER and The Guild welcome the European Commission's objective to place research and innovation at the heart of a resilient Europe. To strengthen the competitiveness of the EU and secure its prosperity, researchers, innovators and research managers must be empowered to flourish and fulfil their roles – including through research and innovation (R&I) projects that contribute to implementing the EU Competitiveness Compass. With this statement, we emphasise that widely spread and predictable call deadlines, year after year, are essential for researchers, innovators and research managers to deliver excellent research and innovation, thereby contributing to European excellence and competitiveness.

Professionalisation of research management

The [Research Management Initiative](#) under the [ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024](#) and the recently published [RM COMP - European Competence Framework for Research Managers](#) focus on the professionalisation of research management. We welcome these initiatives, as a strong community of skilled research managers plays a crucial role in supporting researchers to prepare and implement excellent, high-quality R&I projects.

A year unlike others

In a normal year, call deadlines under the framework programme are widely spread. The year 2025, however, is an exception. While anticipating the definition of new policy priorities for the European Commission von der Leyen 2024-2029, the Horizon Europe work programme 2023-2024 was updated with 2025 calls to ensure continuity of recurrent actions. The rest of the 2025 work programme was negotiated after the transition period and based on the new policy priorities. This has led to an abnormal clustering of 2025 deadlines in September. In fact, 2025 calls under the Horizon Europe clusters 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6, the missions, WIDERA, ERC, MSCA, Research Infrastructures and the EIC all have deadlines in that month. While we welcome the pre-publication of work programmes, this does not resolve the issue of concentrated deadlines.

To further support the professionalisation of research management, we encourage the adoption of good practices being developed by some national funding agencies that better support work–

life balance and caring responsibilities — key factors for equality, diversity and inclusion, including gender equality. Such measures include adjusting the timing of call closures to earlier in the day. For example, setting call deadlines at 14:00 (rather than end of day) has shown positive results in some national contexts. We suggest that the European Commission pilots such adjustments in future work programmes, building on these best practices.

The impacts

The severe concentration of call deadlines in September has a significant impact on research managers across Europe. Research managers can only fulfil their role in supporting researchers to submit and implement excellent, impactful and high-quality research proposals fit for the right calls if they are provided sufficient time to perform their tasks throughout the year. Due to the abnormal concentration of call deadlines in 2025, Research Support Offices will be forced to prioritise and scale back pre-award and post-award services delivered, not only for September 2025, but also in the surrounding months and in subsequent years. The workload will be extremely high around the summer of 2025, creating human resources challenges and forcing researchers and research managers to prioritise due to this artificial bottleneck, rather than on the basis of the quality and potential of the proposals. Some Research Support Offices may resort to hiring consultants for grant support activities, which may hinder the professionalisation of the community and the development of a grantspersonship culture in institutions.

We emphasise that well-developed and supported proposals – fit for call requirements and of highest quality – lead to more efficient processes, improved project management, and ultimately greater excellence in R&I outcomes. This, in turn, strengthens Europe's competitiveness by enabling research and innovation to fully play its role in securing the continent's prosperity.

Therefore, we call on the European Commission and the Member States to:

- ensure widely spread and predictable call deadlines of Framework Programmes year after year, in line with the objective to support the professionalisation of research management and regardless of transition periods in the leadership of the European Commission;
- pilot adjustments in future work programmes to the timing of call deadlines, building on best practices in some national contexts – for example, setting call closures at 14:00 (instead of end of day).