

# EURAXESS Korea Quarterly Newsletter Issue 10 Q3 2020



## Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Our fast-paced world demands us to constantly attend to the latest developments in the fields of our interest. The reality as we know it will be incessantly changed by this pandemic, but what we need to be able to do, is handle things as they are right now. While the research world has moved faster in response to the current pandemic by embracing many events online, I kindly encourage you to [contact me directly](#) if you have suggestions for the types of events you would like me to organize for you.

In this edition of EURAXESS Worldwide newsletter, we explore the current opportunities under the Horizon 2020 'Green Deal' call and scan ahead at how Horizon Europe, the European Union's next seven-year framework programme for research and innovation (R&I) funding, will potentially embrace new 'green' imperatives.

Furthermore, we take readers on a tour of the Bulgarian research and innovation (R&I) and development landscape; the main players, priorities, strategies and mechanisms driving this Balkan nation's efforts to modernise and boost its competitive edge.

I remain optimistic and I hope to meet you directly in the foreseeable future.

Enjoy reading the newsletter and wishing you good health!

- *Tomasz Wierzbowski*, EURAXESS Korea Representative

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Web: [korea.euraxess.org](http://korea.euraxess.org)

Mail: [korea@euraxess.net](mailto:korea@euraxess.net)

Twitter: [@EURAXESS\\_Korea](https://twitter.com/EURAXESS_Korea)

Address: #302, Main Building HUFS,  
Seoul Campus, 107, Imun-ro, Seoul, 02450

*Edited by Dr. Tomasz WIERZBOWSKI*  
*EURAXESS Korea Representative*

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# Hot topic: A big ‘green’ deal for research and innovation

In its Communication ([COM\(2019\) 640 final](#)), the Commission highlights the greater value that needs to be given to protecting and restoring natural ecosystems, improving human health, and promoting and investing in digital transformation as enablers and drivers of the changes needed.

**Advancing Europe together!** The Green Deal call seeks to mobilise R&I to foster a “just and sustainable societal transition”. Consortia are invited to submit proposals corresponding to the 11 priority areas (eight thematic and three horizontal) that broadly reflect the main streams of the Green Deal. Emphasis is on showing how R&I can provide concrete solutions matching the Green Deal’s main priorities.

Pilot applications, demonstration projects, tangible products and innovative projects should be able to boost governance of the green and digital transition. Experimentation and social innovation to find new ways of engaging civil society and empowering citizens is also encouraged.

The call addresses new challenges emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, seeking R&I contributions to increasing societal resilience in agriculture, biodiversity and modernisation efforts working towards greener, more circular industry. (See our side story to this feature for the Green Deal call themes and timeline.)

## *More information*

Questions can also be sent to the European Commission’s service at: [RTD-H2020-GREEN-DEAL-CALL@ec.europa.eu](mailto:RTD-H2020-GREEN-DEAL-CALL@ec.europa.eu)

## Green Deal call themes

The European Commission has issued a dedicated ‘Green Deal-related’ call for projects under Horizon 2020, the EU’s current research and innovation funding programme. The call themes reflect the general priorities of the European Green Deal, as shown with links to the relevant fact sheets below:

- [Call area 1: Increasing climate ambition: cross-sectoral challenges](#)
- [Call area 2: Clean, affordable and secure energy](#)
- [Call area 3: Industry for a clean and circular economy](#)
- [Call area 4: Energy and resource-efficient buildings](#)
- [Call area 5: Sustainable and smart mobility](#)
- [Call area 6: Farm to fork](#)
- [Call area 7: Restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services](#)
- [Call area 8: Zero-pollution, toxic-free environment](#)



- [Call area 9: Strengthening our knowledge in support of the European Green Deal](#)
- [Call area 10: Empowering citizens for transition towards a climate neutral, sustainable Europe](#)
- [Call area 11: Accelerating the clean energy transition and access in partnership with Africa](#)

Announced at the beginning of the summer, stakeholders were first invited to consult on the approach the call should take before the official launch was scheduled to take place. The milestones were presented as follows:

- 3 June 2020: Deadline for sending online feedback about the call
- Mid-September 2020: Formal adoption of Green Deal call, amending the Horizon 2020 work programme (2018-20)
- Mid-September 2020: Publication and opening of the call
- 22-24 September 2020: Opportunity to find partners at [EU R&I Days](#)
- End-January 2021: Deadline for submitting project proposals

## International participation in the Green Deal call

As with Horizon 2020, the Green Deal call is open to participants from the rest of the world. Organisations from any sector and country can apply to the calls as long as they join a consortium with European partners.

Although international cooperation is encouraged in all themes and areas of the Green Deal call, two of them are addressed participants from international institutions:

- [Africa green transition and energy access](#)
- [Prevention and fighting of extreme wildfires](#) (United States, Canada, Australia, Russia, Brazil, South America, Indonesia, Japan and South Africa).

## Horizon 2020 virtual brokerage events on the European Green Deal call

An info-day and networking event will take place on **13 and 14 October 2020**. It is addressed to those who are interested in finding partners and forming consortia for submitting proposals under the Green deal call.

Register [here](#)

See brokerage events offered in all thematic areas of the Green Deal, such as [water](#), [social science and humanities](#), etc.



# EURAXESS members in focus: The spirit of research and innovation in Bulgaria

## Strategy and key agencies

Starting with the strategy first, Bulgaria has devised its National Development Programme, or 'BULGARIA 2030', as its main strategic document in the hierarchy of national programming documents. This strategy determines the vision and overall goals of development policies in all sectors of government, including territorial dimensions. The document sets out three strategic goals, five development areas (axes) and 13 national priorities.

"The Government's intentions in each policy area will be detailed in the full version [of] the National Development Programme BULGARIA 2030, due by the end of 2020, which will include a detailed indicative financial framework, a preliminary impact assessment and a mechanism for controlling and monitoring the implementation of the strategic document," according to the [Ministry of Finance website](#).

## Funding tools

Research and innovation funding is concentrated mostly through the [Bulgaria National Science Fund](#) at the Ministry of Education and Science and through the European structural and investment funds.

## S&T international cooperation

The most helpful way to find your orientation in the S&T international cooperation priorities and aspects in Bulgaria is to take a look at the lists of agreements and collaborative projects on the [Bulgarian Academy of Sciences](#) (BAS) website, as well as on the similar pages of each Bulgarian university, for example [Sofia University](#).

## Introducing the national research landscape

- In the following paragraphs, we provide an outline of the main science, technology and innovation (ST&I) framework, including the ministries involved, funding agencies, and so on.

On the [website of the Bulgarian Ministry of the Education and Science](#) there is a helpful page with all important links to the ministries and funding agencies that support research and innovation.

EURAXESS – Researchers in Motion is an initiative of the European Research Area (ERA) that addresses barriers to researchers mobility and seeks to enhance their career development. This pan-European effort is currently supported by 42 countries, each of which will be profiled in our quarterly e-newsletters.

In this edition, we will zoom on Bulgaria



**Capital:**  
Sofia

**Government:**  
Parliamentary Republic

**Population:**  
7 million

**Language:**  
Bulgarian (Cyrillic script)

**Motto:**  
Unity makes strength

**Size:**  
110,993.6km<sup>2</sup> (16<sup>th</sup> largest in Europe)

In terms of the academic system, there are some **50 accredited institutions** including universities, academies, colleges, etc. (September 2019). In the past, research in Bulgaria was concentrated around the institutes of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Higher education institutions (HEIs) began to participate actively in scientific research and projects only after 1989. Currently, there are several recognised universities that develop scientific and applied research. **Sofia University 'St. Kliment ohridski'** (see photo) is the largest and most prestigious educational and scientific centre in the country.

The **Bulgarian Academy of Sciences** is the leading scientific centre and spiritual leader in this field. It conducts research, training and activities of national and international importance and solves problems related to the development of Bulgarian society and state.

The Academy has a consistent policy for the development of science and innovation as a condition for economic progress in the country. It is an active participant in the European Research Area.

Today, BAS comprises **42 autonomous scientific units** and is governed in accordance with democratic principles. The Academy employs about 3,000 scientists, accounting for about 15% of those engaged in science in Bulgaria. The Academy produces about half of the scientific output in the country.

## Research priorities

National priorities in research are incorporated through the funding programmes of the Bulgarian National Science Fund and the operational programme (OP) 'Science and education for smart growth' (2014-2020), which support the development and modernisation of two types of research centres - Centers of Excellence and Centres of Competence.

The centers seek to create the necessary conditions to attract highly qualified scientists to conduct research at the highest European level, thus significantly improving the potential for applied research, experimental development and innovation in the region, and within the thematic areas of the Bulgarian Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation. This strategy covers mechatronics and clean technologies, informatics and ICT, industry and healthcare and biotechnologies, as well as the creative and recreative industries. All projects are prepared and implemented in partnership between different scientific organisations, including universities, academic institutes, structures of national institutions, etc.), and they aim to improve the existing scientific infrastructure to facilitate the implementation of research and development, transfer of knowledge and technology, dissemination of research results, and provision of research business services.

## Special features of R&D strategy

The OP 'Innovation and competitiveness' (2014-2020) outlines procedures for the creation and development of Regional Innovation Centres and the development of Innovation Clusters.

Innovation Clusters support innovation by sharing facilities, knowledge and experience, contributing effectively to knowledge transfer, building concrete networks of interdependent actors, often competing in the open market, disseminating information between enterprises and other organisations in the cluster.

The idea behind Regional Innovation Centres is to build and develop modern research and innovation infrastructure for conducting open, applied research, thus contributing to the accelerated socio-economic development in Bulgaria's regions. The focus of the procedure is on creating a working partnership between business and science for the benefit of the regional economy. Businesses have a leading role in creating the conditions for optimising use of Regional Innovation Centres, by introducing and commercialising new technologies created in them. Another important aspect is the creation of a culture of innovation and technology that underpins the success of this partnership.

Given the strategic importance of the topic, all EU Member States, including Bulgaria, signed the Declaration of Cooperation on Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Digital Day 2018. According to the Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence, "By mid-2019 all Member States are encouraged to put in place – and share with other Member States and the Commission – national AI strategies or programmes or add AI dimensions in other relevant strategies and programmes outlining investment levels and implementation measures."

The Coordinated Plan is quite ambitious as it envisions many initiatives, funded by the EU, including through Horizon 2020 and likely its successor next year Horizon Europe. In the Bulgarian context, the relevant national institution is the Ministry of Economy (ME), which is also responsible for the Industry 4.0 Strategy. The ME intends to include an AI pillar in the Industry 4.0 Strategy, and afterwards it will develop a standalone AI Strategy.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is also in the process of developing a document on AI in education and science. When the process is finalised, it can and should be used as input in the ME's strategies. The timeline of this process, however, is unclear as the topic is quite complex and sensitive, especially when it comes to education. The MES stands ready to support the ME in this exercise of common interest. The draft Strategy for Bulgaria's participation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, or 'Industry 4.0', identifies the creation of conditions to deploy the AI technologies in industry as one of the main priorities. Accompanying measures have been planned for this priority, and they will be included in the Action Plan for the Strategy.

## Innovation aspects (funding, companies, startups, Global Innovation Index)

Among the Bulgarian government's key objectives for the period up to 2030 are the technological transformation of the economy, green growth and resource efficiency, and aligning with European digitalisation policies. This will be done through targeted and focused government support, while increasing specialisation in products and industries characterised by a higher intensity in R&D and innovation (and therefore higher added value). This should allow Bulgaria to **boost its competitiveness** globally and involves:

### Business Enterprise Sector

The most helpful connections could be made through the Enterprise Europe Network

Bulgaria:

<https://een.ec.europa.eu/about/broadcasts/bulgaria>

- Improving state-level international collaboration (bilateral and multilateral)
- Encouraging research organisations (ROs) and HEIs to internationalise
- Implementing National Research Programmes to solve social and policy issues
- Encouraging better communication strategies by ROs, HEIs, research infrastructures (RIs), centres of excellence (CoEs), and competence centres (CCs) public funding bodies, research programmes, etc.
- Significant increase in support for R&I in the field of ICT (incl. RIs, CoEs, etc.)
- Improving the legal framework to promote R&I, public-private partnership and intellectual property management (a new Research and Innovation Act)
- Developing and widening the capacity and increasing the expertise of administrative and expert staff working in the field of research, innovation, technological transformation and coordination with Horizon Europe
- Promoting technology readiness level from applied research achievements to their transformation into innovative products, services or processes, and their market launch
- Fostering joint strategic innovation programmes between industry and the research capital in the country for accelerating the transfer of knowledge and research results, commercialisation and generating disruptive innovations
- **Academy-industry relations**
- The government has opened a [national science portal](#) with information about its research programmes, research infrastructures, and researchers. Furthermore, in early 2019, the government has started to put together a National Open Science Portal and national repository.



## Important links:

<https://www.uni-sofia.bg/>

<http://www.bas.bg/en/about-us/>

<https://www.euraxess.bg/>

<https://naukamon.eu/en/home-en/>

<https://www.fni.bg/>

<https://www.minfin.bg/en/869>

<https://een.ec.europa.eu/about/branches/bulgaria>

<http://sf.mon.bg/?go=pagine&pageId=401>

<http://www.bas.bg/en/international-cooperation/>

[https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/eng/the\\_university/international\\_relations](https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/eng/the_university/international_relations)

- Key to promoting the commercialisation of research results and fostering collaboration between academia and business are CCs and CoEs, which are also currently being created.
- The Decree of the Council of Ministers on the establishment and functioning of a mechanism for the awarding and implementation of scientific consultations by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences has been adopted. The main objective of the mechanism is to provide timely, high-quality and independent scientific expertise for the benefit of Bulgaria's executive authorities on issues of strategic importance in formulating policies and instruments for the implementation of state policy, as well as in the transposition of EU directives into the Bulgarian legislation. The mechanism underwrites evidence-based policy-making in view of the new challenges connected with increasingly interdisciplinary policies (such as in the spheres of climate, energy, transport, artificial intelligence, bioeconomy, etc.).
- The Council of Ministers adopted a report, submitted by the Vice-Prime Minister in November 2019, calling for higher quality in the policies and management of the R&I system. The report proposes the establishment of a State agency for research and innovation. An inter-institutional core team was established and held its first meeting in mid-December 2019. In the course of 2020, the team is drafting the preparing the ground for the Agency, which will incorporate an integrated approach to R&I policy and development, and will establish long-term planning and sustainable financing for policy-making in this area.

## Contact:

Svetlana Imitrova

[EURAXESS Bulgaria](#)

E-mail: [svetlana@fmi.uni-sofia.bg](mailto:svetlana@fmi.uni-sofia.bg)

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