



Council of the  
European Union

Brussels, 23 September 2021  
(OR. en)

12103/21

RECH 416  
AELE 97  
RELEX 792  
UK 210

**NOTE**

---

From: The European Commission  
To: Council

---

Subject: Association of third countries to Horizon Europe  
- *Information the Commission on the state of play*

---

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Commission with a view to AOB items at the meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 28 September 2021.

## **AOB - Association of third countries to Horizon Europe**

### *Information from the Commission on the state of play*

Horizon Europe is the most open and by far the largest research and innovation programme globally. Association of third countries to the programme is one of the main instruments to ensure this openness.

The Commission started engaging in association discussions with third countries interested in being associated to Horizon Europe as soon as the Horizon Europe basic acts<sup>1</sup> entered into force in May 2021.

Negotiations are ongoing with all different country categories as described in Article 16 of the Horizon Europe regulation:

**Members of the European Free Trade Association, which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA) (category (a)):** the re-association of Norway and Iceland was confirmed via an amendment to Protocol 31 of the EEA agreement on 24 September (tbc). Liechtenstein does not intend to participate.

**Acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates (category (b)) and European Neighbourhood Policy countries (category (c)):** negotiations were concluded with all six Western Balkan partners (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) and with Turkey, as well as with four Eastern Partners: Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia. Final exchanges are ongoing with Israel, Tunisia and official negotiations with Morocco will start in October.

---

<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe and Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe.

**Third countries and territories fulfilling specific criteria (category (d)):** negotiations are currently ongoing only with the Faroe Islands and should be concluded in October. This Agreement will require a Council Decision on signature and provisional application in accordance with article 218 of TFEU, as well as on conclusion (the latter following the Parliament's consent). As a consequence of the termination of the EU-Swiss Institutional Framework Agreement (IFA) negotiations on 26 May, Switzerland is not considered as a candidate to association at this stage. The United Kingdom will be associated by means of a Protocol to the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). The Commission is working with the aim of associating the United Kingdom at the earliest opportunity. Concerning other possible category (d) countries, exploratory talks are ongoing since July with Canada. Informal talks are being held with Singapore, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Japan to define their interest to pursue association.

All currently negotiated association agreements will have retroactive application dating back to 1 January 2021.

---