



## Position on the 10th Framework Programme

The forthcoming 10<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme<sup>1</sup> should become a key tool to support the inclusive and sustainable development of the European Research Area (ERA). By focusing on excellence and innovation, FP10 should enable the EU to effectively address societal challenges and strengthen the Union's economy. To enhance global competitiveness, the growing internal innovation divide in the EU needs to be addressed urgently.

The key question is: *How to fully exploit the potential of all EU regions, including excellent research teams, innovators and research infrastructures, especially in the EU13<sup>2</sup>, which benefit from structural funds?*

The potential of all EU regions and the results of Horizon Europe should be fully exploited in the most effective way. The ERA needs to focus on deepening cooperation between all Member States, with an emphasis on mobilising EU14 partners to cooperate bilaterally with the EU13, creating synergies with FP10 and facilitating joint multilateral projects. Particular attention should be given to exploiting the results of existing research and ensuring that all EU regions are more involved in testing and implementing these results.

To achieve these objectives, new measures to broaden participation and better coordination of FP10 and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) activities are needed. While maintaining FP10's focus on excellence, better integration of lower-innovation countries into building the EU's collective research and innovation excellence should be ensured.

FP10 presents a unique opportunity to further strengthen the ERA through research excellence and innovation. In designing this programme, it is important to retain the successful elements of existing instruments, while creating new tools to meet new challenges and replace those that have not delivered the expected results.

With an adequate budget, the programme should be clear, simple and transparent, focusing on excellence and demonstrating clear added value through the active involvement of all EU regions, taking into account:

### **1. A stable and ambitious budget to strengthen Europe's competitiveness and unity**

Despite the historically record budget for the entire Horizon Europe programme (almost EUR 100 billion), there are many instruments with very low success rates, and consequently many excellent projects remain unfunded (currently 2/3 of very well evaluated proposals do not receive funding due to the call's budget being exhausted). This leads to a situation where, on the one hand, beneficiaries are discouraged from using the Programme and, on the other hand, the potential of research teams is not fully exploited. In addition, numerous initiatives appearing during the Programme that were not planned in the budget result in redirecting the previously planned budget to other purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> European Union's 10th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

<sup>2</sup> Member States that joined the European Union after 2004.

**We call for the budget of the framework programme to be doubled by min. 100%, at least to EUR 200 billion.** To increase the competitiveness of the European Union as a whole, we need to close the research and innovation gap within the EU itself and with its global competitors. In terms of investment in R&D<sup>3</sup>, the standard among Member States should be to spend a minimum of 3% of GDP on research and innovation, with an increasing share of the private sector. This ambitious target should be the result of an even more ambitious pan-European budget targeting this sector.

## 2. Openness of the Framework Programme

Based on the paradigm of scientific excellence, FP10 should support the development of the best ideas and talent across the European Union, drawing on the knowledge and skills of **all** interested and involved stakeholders, including Member States with **lower levels of innovation** (so-called moderate and emerging innovators) as well as countries associated to the Framework Programme. Successful implementation of the Programme must be based on good administrative and communication coordination between the EU institutions involved, as well as between the EU institutions and the member and associated countries of the Programme, with full transparency.

Stressing the need to remove barriers to the free movement of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology and data, and at the same time expressing support for the fifth freedom for the Single Market (Letta Report), Poland emphasises the role of support for talent development as an indispensable element in strengthening EU competitiveness. Creating attractive working conditions, as well as taking care to ensure equal access and opportunities for the development of scientific careers are directions that FP10 must strengthen. As is the building of excellence in scientific institutions and the implementation of institutional change through the instrument of Gender Equality Plans, which must remain an eligibility criterion for entities implementing projects funded by the Framework Programme. We would like to emphasise the role of regular monitoring and evaluation of the actions envisaged in the Plans and their extension to an intersectional perspective.

The Framework Programme should actively and sustainably support activities at **all levels of technology readiness**. In order to build and strengthen competitiveness, funding for basic research, technological research, building demonstrators towards commercialisation appears crucial. Europe needs to rebalance between the development of technological innovation in its key areas and the declining investment in European cooperation in basic research. Cooperation in Research and Innovation Actions would be a welcome development. FP10 should continue to actively promote the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises. Continuity of programmes dedicated to SMEs and startups should be ensured by developing strong **synergies between instruments**. While appreciating the achievements to date of both the *European Innovation Council* and the *European Institute of Innovation & Technology*, cooperation at operational level should be strengthened in order to fully exploit the potential of European companies. Both Pillar III instruments have the potential to build a comprehensive system for the commercialisation of innovation in Europe, but should be adapted to the needs of the Member States.

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<sup>3</sup> Research and innovation

It is important to **monitor the initiatives funded by the Programme**, in particular those such as the European Partnerships, for their openness and transparency and to ensure broad participation by different types of organisations from all Member States. The programme should increase funding for smaller projects based on cooperation between several actors, fostering cross-border, cross-sectoral cooperation and knowledge exchange and thus significantly increasing the inclusiveness of new partners, thus reversing the current trend of **increasing the number of medium-sized grants**. In addition, increasing funding opportunities for projects with **lower Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs)** and smaller scale, but which foster closer collaboration between participants from different sectors. The programme should also enable **interdisciplinary collaboration through better integration and use of the social sciences, humanities and arts**.

### 3. Evolution and synergy

The idea of multi-centre, interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral cooperation projects with an international dimension (the so-called 3-i: International, Interdisciplinary, Intersectoral) is one of the cornerstones of the Framework Programme and should remain a key element of the activities. Beneficiaries have become accustomed to many of the solutions used, appreciate **the simplification and stability of the system**, and the new framework programme should respond even better to their needs.

It is also worthwhile, as part of the evolution, to work on a better and more structured use of the already implemented **synergy** mechanisms between programmes and instruments inside, including between the pillars of the Programme, as well as with other programmes (synergies with the Structural Funds or EFSI-funded programmes and national programmes), assuming that the Framework Programme focuses its activities and funding exclusively on research and innovation.

### 4. Bridging the innovation gap

Comprehensive action is needed to **reduce the innovation gap** and build on the scientific excellence that exists in all parts of Europe. We can see that actions of this kind already in place are yielding initial positive results, but it is essential to sustain these actions to bridge the gap between Member States. The continuation of these activities in FP10 is also essential to achieve one of the EU's objectives of investing at least 3% of Member States' GDP in R&D and to fully realise the European Research Area. The tailored offer of activities aimed at bridging the innovation gap provides an opportunity for beneficiaries at different levels to benefit, according to their needs and circumstances. These activities effectively support the development of institutions, strengthen the networking potential and visibility of institutions at international level, and allow for a significant increase in experience in managing international projects. **A proportionate increase in funding for these activities**, relative to the resources provided in Horizon Europe, is warranted. We support opinions, including that of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC), on the need to examine the real effect of tools designed to support the strengthening of scientific excellence.

A well-tailored package of actions and tools is needed to increase and strengthen the participation of all Member States, by opening up networks and tapping into Europe's

scientific and innovation potential in R&D, including modern research infrastructures. The diametrical increase in the number of researchers over the last several years opens up a range of new opportunities to make research and innovation a real competitive advantage, using existing tools to support technology transfer, or the mobility of researchers, emphasising international cooperation as essential at every stage of a researcher's career.

The shape of these tools should also be considered in the context of supporting research infrastructures and their networks as hubs for both research and innovation. These centres can strengthen and build scientific human capital in groups of neighbouring countries working together, providing ongoing support to research staff both for competence upgrading and competence change and acquisition of new skills.

It would also be helpful to create additional international maps of research infrastructures at the level of neighbouring and cooperating countries to fill the space between the pan-European ESFRI map and the national maps.

We express our support for strengthening instruments such as EIT RIS and Widening, which strengthen the international capacity of weaker ecosystems. The presence of FP instruments at local level is crucial for the development of all Member States and the reduction of disparities in order to fully exploit the potential of Europe as a whole. These instruments are **key to reducing the innovation gap**.

We also point out that **the autonomy and independence of the ERC** is crucial and is often the reason why outstanding researchers from all over the world move to Europe. Maintaining the sole evaluation criterion of scientific excellence and continuing the bottom-up approach, which allows researchers to shape their projects independently, are crucial. **An increase in the ERC grants budget is necessary** to bring funding in line with current economic realities, including the level of inflation. In order to meet the challenges Europe is facing in times of dangerous geopolitical change, the EU cannot afford to miss out on the research and innovation potential that resides **in all Member States**.

## 5. Use and impact of Framework Programme projects results

In the new FP10 financial perspective, more emphasis should be placed on the **exploitation of the results of R&D projects**. Exploitation of the results in the economy is important to ensure innovation, which is crucial for the development of the European economy, while at the same time ensuring the excellence of the R&D projects carried out. The effectiveness of the solutions introduced in this area depends on the refinement of the principles of knowledge valorisation and the provision of support instruments for the transfer of research results to the economy, in order to enable applicants to implement different models of behaviour. In addition, we should consider better involvement of all Member States in the testing and implementation of new technologies resulting from FP projects.

In particular, we note that research and innovation funded by the EU Framework Programme must contribute to responding to societal challenges and needs, while also influencing public perceptions of innovation and development inputs.

Understanding the need for commercialised solutions to be profitable, we draw attention to the need to fund the development of technologies with a social and environmental character. Thus, FP10 has the opportunity to contribute to supporting

research and innovation with a positive impact on the future of Europe, which will increase public confidence and acceptance of science and innovation.

## 6. Research Security

**The flexibility of FP10 to respond to sudden challenges** is needed. A priority for modern Europe should be to secure research results while ensuring access to technology and research in as many aspects of human functioning as possible. Ensuring **the continued development of innovation in civil security research** should be one of the important issues for the European Commission and the Member States in the long term. In doing so, priority will be given to maintaining Europe's strategic autonomy in key technological areas, allowing for **greater independence in unstable** times. Complex next-generation defence systems in all strategic domains will require huge investments in research and development, which are beyond the capacity of an individual EU Member States.

## 7. European Research Area and the 10th Framework Programme

A well-functioning FP10 is also about ensuring its **alignment with the priorities of the European Research Area Policy Agenda**. The FP tools and instruments should reflect the key values of the ERA, including the pursuit of excellence, scientific ethics, openness of science, gender equality and academic freedom.

Joint activities within and between Member States aimed at strengthening the European research and innovation ecosystem and responding to global challenges or **strengthening support for research infrastructures**, which are the 'backbone' of the ERA, seem to fit into the overall picture of FP10 and ERA coexistence.