

A strong FP10 for a strong and competitive Europe

Europe's economy is at a turning point. In the face of geopolitical uncertainty and growing calls for technological sovereignty, we cannot afford to let Europe's industrial base erode. As Draghi, Letta and others have stressed, Research & Innovation (R&I) is the foundation for Europe's future competitiveness. FP10 must rise to this challenge.

We welcome the Commission's proposal. The decision to establish FP10 as a self-standing framework programme is a crucial step that ensures continuity and recognisability. Equally important is the dedicated pillar for applied and collaborative research, which acknowledges the central role of translating knowledge into industrial and societal impact – from decarbonising energy-intensive manufacturing to advancing digital and circular solutions in sectors such as automotive, aluminium, or brick production. The proposed budget increase sends a strong signal that R&I is seen as a strategic priority for Europe, and the thematic orientations identified – clean transition, health, digital leadership and resilience – are rightly aligned with Europe's long-term needs.

At the same time, we call for greater ambition. The budget increase announced by the Commission must be understood as a floor, not a ceiling. To deliver on its promise, FP10 requires at least €220 billion. Within this envelope, 60 % of resources must be dedicated to collaborative R&I under Pillar II. Current plans would leave collaborative research trailing behind, despite the fact that this is precisely where science meets industry and society, and where Europe's competitiveness is most directly strengthened. Raising the level of investment is essential to close the strategic gap with Europe's main competitors, who invest far more decisively in translating research into innovation and industrial leadership. In addition, FP10 should allow for longer project durations that provide researchers with stable perspectives, helping to retain key knowledge and avoid brain drain.

Furthermore, FP10 must fully reflect the role of Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs). Innovation depends on the entire R&I cycle – from frontier science to applied collaborative research, to industrial uptake. Within this cycle, RTOs play a unique and strategic bridging role. They are not only key enablers of technological translation, but also essential partners in training and upskilling the highly qualified people Europe's industry depends on. Therefore, RTOs connect research with industry, enable experimentation, and help scale critical technologies. Their systematic involvement is essential for Europe's innovation capacity and technological sovereignty.

Importantly, governance structures must be clear and inclusive. The proposed interaction between Pillar II and the European Competitiveness Fund remains vague and underdeveloped. Without clarity, there is a real risk that governance processes could undermine R&I impact. We therefore call for transparent rules that define how FP10 and the ECF work together, and for binding involvement of industry, RTOs and other applied research players in the governance of Pillar II. This applies equally to the governance of the European Partnerships, which represent a

key instrument to mobilise stakeholders and investments around strategic priorities. Here, RTOs must have a seat at the table to ensure that partnerships deliver on their mission of bridging science, innovation and industrial deployment. In addition, stronger synergies with other funding sources – for instance with cohesion funds – should be actively promoted to increase impact and efficiency.

Finally, simplification must move beyond lip-service. The Commission rightly seeks more agility and flexibility. Applicants and stakeholders need predictable, transparent rules. Simplification must mean fewer unnecessary layers of bureaucracy, faster decision-making, and leaner instruments that enable research and innovation.

In short, FP10 must be ambitious, adequately funded, and strategically governed. Only then can it become the engine of Europe's competitiveness for the decade ahead.

Rückfragen

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