

2024 High Level Workshop ON THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

Strengthening European Cohesion and Competitiveness through Research and Innovation: the Science Agenda for European Progress in a Global Context

Concluding Statement on Commitment to Strengthening European R&I

4 DEC 2024 – *Science Europe Member Organisations gathered in Budapest on 19 and 20 November to identify key issues to strengthen European competitiveness through R&I. The event, co-organised with the Hungarian Research Network (HUN-REN) and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), took place under the auspices of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Heads of national research funding and research performing organisations, policy makers, and researchers agreed upon the following:*

In a time of many unpredictable and complex societal, environmental, and geopolitical challenges, we need scientific knowledge more than ever. Unless there is a radical shift towards more financial investment and improved policies to foster research and innovation, the EU will lack the scientific knowledge base to maintain and increase its socio-cultural development and economic competitiveness.

Calling on Governments to Commit to Strengthening European Research and Innovation

Europe faces critical challenges in attracting and retaining top researchers and talent: significant differences in salaries, contract stability, and support measures across the continent often hinder the ability of institutions to do so, particularly in the EU13 countries. Promoting national investments of 3% of GDP into research and innovation and strengthening the next EU Framework Programme (FP10), including a clear focus on both blue-sky and collaborative research, would bolster Europe's competitiveness while ensuring inclusivity and cohesion across Member States.

Freedom of scientific enquiry is a cornerstone of scientific excellence and innovation. While there is no 'one-size-fits-all' definition of scientific excellence, it is a concept well-identified by expert scientific communities. Research institutions share the responsibility of ensuring academic freedom to generate excellence: balancing institutional autonomy with accountability are pivotal factors for producing the broad knowledge base needed for socio-cultural and economic progress.

Science Europe Member Organisations have identified structural and institutional factors that European governments should urgently act upon to preserve and enhance the competitiveness of the European research and innovation ecosystem. Addressing societal challenges needs sustained research across all disciplines, in particular through cross-border scientific collaboration.

This requires unanimous commitment to the following priorities:

- ❖ **Guarantee freedom of scientific enquiry** across Member States as a cornerstone of excellence and innovation.
- ❖ **Secure autonomy of scientific and institutional governance** within a clear framework of accountability, grounded in the principle of freedom of scientific inquiry.
- ❖ **Improve conditions for researcher mobility** across Europe and beyond to attract and retain talent.
- ❖ **Increase both European and national funding** (the latter to 3% of GDP) for R&I, as a primary means to further strengthen the competitiveness of Europe.
- ❖ **Make reciprocal conditions for collaboration** a guiding method towards tackling global challenges.
- ❖ **Foster Open Science practices** as the main way to accessing scientific knowledge equitably.

These goals provide a reference for Member States to address structural barriers on the national and European levels. At the same time, Science Europe Member Organisations commit to implementing institutional reforms and adapting internal policies to contribute to the successful realisation of the priorities outlined above. Addressing structural and institutional challenges in a concerted way will strengthen Europe's research and innovation ecosystem and contribute to the continent's global competitiveness.