

FP10: Beyond an Investment

Reinforcing the commitment towards a strong and independent FP10

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Europe faces significant and multifaceted challenges, including those related to climate and natural degradation, as well as an increasingly unstable geopolitical situation. At the same time, it needs to maintain its competitiveness and global leadership in research and innovation (R&I). It is crucial that Europe's responses to these issues are based on sound scientific knowledge. We therefore need a robust R&I system that supports basic and applied sciences equally, as well as curiosity-driven research alongside objective-oriented initiatives. We must commit to academic freedom and scientific excellence under all circumstances. FP10 needs to nurture an R&I ecosystem that embraces international collaboration, remains inclusive, and is as open as possible and as secure as necessary.

The political rationale on European R&I is becoming increasingly characterised by objectives of economic competitiveness. This focus of the European Commission's Competitiveness Compass, as well as the Communication on the Multiannual Financial Framework risks sidelining the autonomy of R&I, subordinating it to economic competitiveness criteria. Academic autonomy, fundamental research, and curiosity-driven research are necessary components for a robust European R&I system that serves as a foundation for crucial progress in improving economic strength and societal development.

Against this backdrop, leaders and senior-level representatives of Science Europe Member Organisations held insightful discussions on the objectives and priorities of FP10, its levels of investment, structure, and programme characteristics, and how it can be both open and secure. They **reaffirmed their call for a strong, standalone FP10, with an ambitious budget, opposing integration of the programme in a broader Competitiveness Fund.**

European R&I funding through FP10 should build on the strengths of Horizon Europe, while addressing its limitations. It should be an evolution, rather than a complete structural overhaul. Specifically, we recommend:

- **A standalone FP10, with a budget** of at least **€220 billion**, as proposed by the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE). The budget should be ringfenced and separate from the proposed Competitiveness Fund.
- **Reinforced support for fundamental research** and the safeguarding of **curiosity-driven, free scientific inquiry based on excellence**, sustaining the continuum between research and innovation while protecting academic independence.
- A strong commitment to inclusiveness and collaboration by **fostering fundamental research partnerships, particularly through lower Technology Readiness Level (TRL) collaborative projects.**
- **A more cohesive and integrated European R&I landscape**, reducing disparities across regions and ensuring that Europe retains and attracts research talent through improved career opportunities for researchers and support structures.
- **EU-level co-ordination on research security integrated into FP10**, which fosters secure and open collaboration, clarifies responsibilities and lowers the administrative burden on researchers and research organisations.

Science Europe welcomes the expressions of openness from the European Commission to collaborate and shape FP10 with the R&I community. We also look forward to constructive exchanges with the European Parliament – particularly following the ITRE Committee's draft report, which aligns with a number of Science Europe's points of advocacy.

Furthermore, we sincerely hope that the proposed Warsaw Declaration by the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union will support a standalone FP10. Maintaining a dialogue with all key EU institutions is crucial to enabling the excellent, free research system necessary for Europe's strategic, cultural, and competitive development.

Context

Leaders and senior-level representatives of Science Europe Member Organisations met in Brussels on 18 and 19 February to discuss Science Europe's priorities for the upcoming 10th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10). The recommendations in the landmark reports by Enrico Letta, Mario Draghi, and the Expert Group on the Interim Evaluation of Horizon Europe led by Manuel Heitor were taken into account. The event was kindly hosted by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) in Brussels, with the Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation Ekaterina Zaharieva participating in the opening session.



Science Europe is the association of major research funding and research performing organisations in Europe.



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We define long-term perspectives for European research and champion best-practice approaches that enable high-quality research for knowledge advancement and the needs of society.

We are uniquely placed to lead advancements to the European Research Area and inform global developments through participation in research initiatives where science is a strong and trusted component of sustainable economic, environmental, and societal development.

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