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RECOMMENDATION OF THE COUNCIL

## **Recommendation on the Design of the 10<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10) of the European Union**

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**FORWIT**  
**Austrian Council for Sciences, Technology,  
and Innovation**

Pestalozzigasse 4 / D1, 1010 Vienna, Austria  
T +43 1 713 14 14 - 0  
F +43 1 713 14 14 - 99  
E [office@forwit.at](mailto:office@forwit.at)  
[forwit.at](http://forwit.at)

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## Recommendation on the Design of the 10<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10) of the European Union

### Preface

With the next multiannual financial framework of the European Union coming into effect on 1 January 2028, discussions surrounding its implementation have already begun. Regarding science and innovation policy, the framework programme for research and innovation is of particular importance. Its 10<sup>th</sup> edition (hereinafter referred to as FP10) is set to start in 2028 as well.

The framework programme is relevant not only due to its funding opportunities and transnational research collaborations, but also its direct impacts on how national policies for research, science, innovation, and technological development are shaped. The Austrian Council for Sciences, Technology, and Innovation (FORWIT) has intensively examined the criteria that ensure a future-oriented design of FP10.

For this reason, FORWIT identifies five thematic blocks of focus:

1. Basic Research
2. Transformation Processes
3. The Future of Competitiveness
4. Defence Research
5. Development of Collaborative Research, Co-Funding, and ERA

The following recommendations shall serve as a guideline for the Austrian Federal Government for the upcoming negotiations on FP10.

### Recommendation

FORWIT supports the call for a budget of €200 billion for FP10. Europe's competitiveness against the United States and China will therefore be ensured in the future. That budget should be secured exclusively for the purposes set out in FP10 throughout this period, and not diverted towards other priorities. To respond appropriately to crisis situations, a dedicated contingency fund should also be established outside of FP10.

In FP10, suitable instruments should be established to better connect the programme's different components ("pillars") and in order to avoid its isolation. The aim is set to facilitate symbiosis between the framework programme's components and individual research programmes.

Outsourcing of operational procedures to executive agencies has not always led to the desired increase in strategic capacity within the European Commission. An increase in demands, due to more tasks and regulations has made it challenging to achieve the programme's objectives. This is because of an expanded administrative burden on both the EU and national levels of additional required financial and personnel resources. In order to reduce the administrative burden that comes with proposal submissions, longer project durations—which also consider inflation rates—should be made optional.

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The success of FP10 will depend significantly on whether it is possible to build up the capacity necessary for its meaningful and effective implementation—both at EU level and in member states. This includes early consideration of extended requirements, such as the desired complementarity of instruments and increased co-operation between science and industry. We also recommend retaining the existing name “Horizon Europe” for the framework programme.

## 1. Basic Research

Thanks to previous editions of the framework programme, basic research in Europe has performed extremely well in comparison to research seen internationally. It's essential to maintain and expand this position. In times of polycrisis and growing uncertainty, basic research ensures the production of new knowledge that will be available for various areas of application, including emerging ones. Long-term financial stability should be guaranteed while, at the same time, efforts to improve translatability should be increased.

- FORWIT supports increased funding for basic research instruments, particularly the European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). It is crucial to ensure the strategic independence of the ERC, as this has been a key factor in its success thus far.
- Interdisciplinary, cooperative, and translational research should be encouraged and facilitated wherever appropriate. This also includes specifically integrating researchers from industry.
- A greater focus should be on supporting career opportunities for researchers. International and intersectoral mobility should be made easier and be proactively supported. Working and living conditions of researchers, including EU-wide pension entitlements, should be improved throughout the European research area (ERA), to keep and increase Europe's role as an attractive region for the global “brain circulation”.

## 2. Transformation Processes

Climate action, digitalisation and strengthening systemic resilience have all taken centre stage in public and political discourse. To master these challenges, it is crucial to transform different areas of society, such as transport, energy provision, and food production, with research and innovation playing a key role. To ensure a sustainable, resource-efficient, and growth-promoting transformation, FP10 is required to offer corresponding programmes.

- To successfully navigate these transformation processes, there needs to be a close integration between the European level and member states, as well as effective portfolio management across programme lines.
- In designing these transformation processes, it is essential to consider the specific needs and insights of research and innovation from the beginning. However, these processes extend far beyond just research and innovation—they require a holistic approach that brings together multiple stakeholders and disciplines. Therefore, it would be justified to allocate funds, such as those provided for EU missions, primarily from budget lines outside FP10. Resources, structures, and processes should be made available to link these other areas together and with the corresponding activities within FP10 in a meaningful way.

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- The humanities, social sciences, and cultural sciences bring knowledge that is essential for successfully implementing transformative agendas. They should therefore continue to be embedded at all levels of the framework programme.

### 3. The Future of Competitiveness

The Letta Report programmatically proposed that research and innovation be understood as the “fifth freedom” of the European single market. This highlights the importance of collaboration between science and industry to ensure Europe’s competitiveness.

- Strategically important value chains related to European sovereignty and resilience must be strengthened. This includes, among other things, commissioning relevant follow-up research to identify and analyse these value chains. Large-scale EU-wide co-operation initiatives, particularly the Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI), should be reinforced in critical technological fields, with interdisciplinary research and innovation playing a key role.
- Co-operation between industry and science must be strengthened at all levels (regional, national, and EU). Regional or inter-regional technology and research clusters, along with the necessary research infrastructure and technology transfer centres, should be further developed in order to strengthen strategic technologies and their research and development in the EU—taking into account the involvement of SME. Furthermore, pre-competitive research itself must be strengthened to increase industry participation in FP10, with a focus on research in key technologies, including standardisation activities.
- The European Innovation Council (EIC) is a valuable instrument for translating research findings into market-ready innovations. However, Europe still suffers from a relatively low availability of risk capital, and new initiatives are needed to address this shortage—the EIC alone cannot resolve it. Measures should be established and implemented to support European players in keeping pace with international competition in emerging technology fields. In order to support start-ups as they scale, it’s crucial to dismantle any national barriers that may exist and work towards greater harmonisation, particularly in areas such as corporate legal structures.
- Efforts to develop European Universities as attractive training and research institutions must be supported. This also requires strengthening research within such an alliance.

### 4. Defence Research

The geopolitical tensions of recent years have made it increasingly clear that the European Union needs a proactive security policy. Within and outside the framework programme, defence research should be given greater consideration, with close coordination between civilian research and defence research being necessary.

- The concept of “dual use” requires a clear definition in the context of research. FORWIT recommends to separate research projects by technology readiness levels (TRL). Projects with low TRL should only be supported within FP10: as basic research is too far from application and as restrictions can hinder innovation, it is generally recommended not to use the term “potential dual use” in this context.

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- Within FP10, research projects with high TRL should continue to be exclusively funded for civilian applications, while separate instruments should be established or expanded for defence research, which must then also include necessary security regulations.
- The budget for defence research should have no negative impact on the funding available for FP10. As the example of the United States shows, basic research is a central element in developing defence capabilities and thus a cornerstone for national and European security.

## **5. Development of Collaborative Research, Co-Funding, and ERA**

Collaborative research across borders should be strengthened in FP10 to foster the development of the European research area. This includes partnerships that require careful deliberation, and clarification of the complementary objectives to prevent a proliferation of instruments.

It is necessary to develop detailed procedures for generating synergies between co-funded programmes, as well as with other funding instruments, such as those within FP10.

In member states, it is essential to ensure that suitable coordination mechanisms exist between relevant ministries, including financial arrangements, to facilitate a highly effective and efficient collaboration between the European and national levels.

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## Background

This recommendation was developed by an internal working group of FORWIT between February and June 2024. The members of the working group were Helga Nowotny (chair), Johanna Pirker, Monika Ritsch-Marte, and Georg Kopetz. It was supported by Bernhard Wally from the FORWIT office.

In a broad-ranging process, we invited 23 Austrian organisations to submit their positions and recommendations on FP10 through a detailed questionnaire:

AIT Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH	Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection
Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH	Austrian Research Promotion Agency
Austrian Academy of Sciences	Austrian Science Fund
Austrian Economic Chambers	Austrian University of Applied Sciences Conference
Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour	Christian Doppler Research Association
Austrian Federal Chancellery	Federation of Austrian Industries
Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology	GeoSphere Austria
Austrian Federal Ministry for Defence	Institute of Science and Technology Austria
Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research	Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft
Austrian Federal Ministry for Finance	OeAD-GmbH
Austrian Federal Ministry for Labour and Economy	Silicon Austria Labs GmbH
	Universities Austria

The written responses were discussed at a workshop with representatives of these organisations on 22 April 2024, and subsequently integrated into a draft text that was approved by the Council.

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