



PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE FUTURE EU RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME (2028-2034)

Throughout 40 years of EU Framework Programmes (FPs), Research and Innovation (R&I) has been an essential asset for the development of the EU, promoting the values that strengthen and preserve a prosperous, equitable, competitive and democratic European society.

Since 1984, the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) has been a beneficiary of EU R&I FPs, participating in many of the large variety of sub-programmes and types of actions developed under those Programmes. All along this journey, CSIC learned to expand and to strengthen its scientific and technical ambition; to contribute to societal challenges through international inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration; to actively contribute to the European research infrastructures ecosystem; to evolve from a traditional research culture towards an open, collaborative, inclusive, and outstanding research community integrating all research professions; and to introduce the necessary structural changes to accommodate all means of administrative procedures and corresponding mechanisms of accountability.

All the above goes beyond the FPs being just a funding mechanism, clearly acting as a catalyst for impactful collaborative and excellent research and institutional transformation in Europe.

With the same enthusiasm and pride that we celebrate and share our collective achievements over these 40 years of EU R&I FPs, CSIC advocates for a robust FP10. In the opinion of CSIC, some key traits that should characterise this new FP include:

- **Strong political commitment** to ensure **adequate financial resources** coherent and consistent with the pursued ambitions. The Union and its forthcoming Multiannual financial framework should draw strategic lines and programmes to ensure the necessary transformations towards a competitive and dynamic EU. The EU's GDP investments in R&I falls clearly behind that of our stronger competitors.¹ The budget of FP10 should be unmistakably **ring-fenced**, otherwise its impact and ambition may be shadowed by emerging political priorities which, legitimate as they may be, should be covered by other programmes and additional budgets.

¹ EUROSTAT, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=R%26D_expenditure&oldid=627002#Gross_domestic_expenditure_on_R.26D



- **Excellence in R&I is a must.** The only way to contribute in a genuine and efficient way to the digital, sustainable and economic transformation of our society is by supporting R&I based on excellence. Its contribution to EU competitiveness is embedded in a metabolic-like pathway, in which each step is critical for the next one, no element can substitute another, and the right balance is key to success. In other words, the main outcome of research cannot replace the role of a dynamic industrial policy, though both are essential for a competitive EU. This also infers the necessity of a **full and balanced coverage of TRLs**, aiming at creating space for exploration and trial of new ideas and practices as well as to nurture the basis of scientific, technological and global challenges.
- **A powerful R&I ecosystem.** A fundamental prerequisite for excellent R&I to be performed in Europe is the presence of a strong ecosystem of **research and technology infrastructures** (RIs) throughout the Union. The role of Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) should be explicitly recognised as central within that ecosystem. RIs allow scientists and innovators to advance on their research, and foster intersectoral, interdisciplinary and international collaboration. Europe needs to continue empowering researchers and innovators and promoting their mobility through the **continuation of the European Research Council, the European Innovation Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions**, that have proven their effectivity in training and attracting the best talent to the EU, as well as in providing impactful results and outputs.
- **Collaboration is the flagship of EU R&I.** Research collaboration has been the core of the European Research Area and it is also the basis for targeting global challenges. Collaborative research should encompass **all sizes**, small, medium and big consortia, and **all TRLs**, from basic excellent research performed by consortia – not limiting low TRLs and non-thematically oriented research only to individual projects – to innovation actions with industry. International collaboration, **as open as possible and as closed as necessary**, should continue in the next FP10: global challenges need to be tackled globally. Furthermore, just as global challenges cannot be faced from a single country or region of the world alone, neither can they be tackled from a single sector or area of knowledge. **EU Missions** have the potential to provide solutions to these challenges, but their scope goes beyond R&I and the FP. Therefore, they would need to have their own programme or dedicated instrument, allowing them to pool resources from other EU programmes, fostering synergies, as well as attracting other public and private investments.
- **Allow for more creative solutions to challenges.** The use of very long, prescriptive and detailed description of topics in the work programmes might open the door to artificial means of constructing successful proposal narratives and consortia, in detriment of the **power and creativity of humankind** and *ad hoc* concerted interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration **towards a well-defined goal**. Non-prescriptive description of topics shall generate a varied set of projects and approaches around a well-defined goal that could be strategically managed through a transparent portfolio-based approach for addressing global and complex challenges.



- **Continuation is key to simplicity.** For additional simplification and reduction of the administrative burden to beneficiaries, it is essential to continue programmes, instruments and cost models that have demonstrated efficiency and have already been embedded into the EU R&I ecosystem. The addition of new instruments or models should be carefully analysed and studied with sufficient time for the pilot actions to cover the whole cycle of a project before scaling up the number of calls and projects.
- **Stability and rationality.** All calls and actions of the EU R&I FP10 should follow the same procedures and rules and should also be included in the F&T Portal pursuing transparency, openness and consistency, including all the different Partnerships. **Partnerships** are a great instrument to align programmes with industry, national and regional authorities and to involve stakeholders, however, their scope and number need to be carefully considered to avoid overlapping and to allow synergies. Stability is not synonymous of perpetual initiatives. A deep revision of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) seems necessary, especially its administrative and governance models, as well as its expected contribution to the whole research and innovation chain.
- **Academic freedom should prevail in FP10.** The geopolitical conditions should not overshadow the contributions and impact of former EU R&I FPs and should not modify its mission and vision. Certain changes, like opening FP10 to other uses beyond civil defence, may disturb the EU R&I ecosystem with unprecedented consequences notably if dual-use permeates into FP10 funding. Academic freedom should prevail in FP10 and researchers should safeguard the possibility of a conscious decision to contribute to military research, or exclusively to research with civilian purposes.

As President von der Leyen explicitly stated, Europe needs to “put research and innovation at the heart of our economy”². Celebrating these 40 years of EU R&I Framework Programmes, CSICs reaffirms its commitment to the European Research Area and the European R&I ecosystem, as well as to achieving a future Framework Programme that continues to constitute a pivotal contribution to the competitiveness and well-being of the entire Union.

²Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029.
https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf