

## **Joint statement Ehler-Repasi on MFF negobox proposal by Irish presidency**

*10 October 2026, Brussels*

For two years, Europe has agreed on the diagnosis. Mario Draghi named closing the innovation gap as Europe's first competitiveness priority and called for the research framework programme to be doubled to €200 billion. The Commission's own independent expert group, chaired by Manuel Heitor, went further and put the need at €220 billion. In April, the European Parliament adopted its position on the next long-term budget with €200 billion for Horizon Europe (in current prices). The diagnosis is settled. What is missing is the will to pay for the cure.

The Cypriot Negotiating Box went in the opposite direction. It trimmed the overall budget by 2 percent, but cut Horizon Europe by twice as much, to €148 billion in 2025 prices (€167 bn in current prices) – below even the Commission's €155 billion (€175 in current prices). The Irish Presidency now proposes €140 billion – a further cut of €8 billion.

Let us be clear about what such a cut means. It is not a saving. It is lost growth. The cut of €8 billion proposed by the Irish Presidency will cost Europe €88 billion in GDP by 2045.

The interim evaluation of Horizon Europe found that every euro of EU funding in Horizon Europe is estimated to generate up to €11 in GDP by 2045. If every euro invested creates growth, every euro cut destroys it. The €7 billion the Cypriot box took out of the Commission's proposal alone means up to €78 billion of output Europe will never see. The additional cuts proposed by the Irish Presidency brings the loss of output for Europe to €165 billion. The €37 billion gap to Parliament's position means up to €407 billion. Calling this budgetary prudence is a contradiction in terms.

Ireland knows this. In July 2025, Ireland's own research minister pointed out that every euro contributed to Horizon Europe is estimated to generate up to €11 in GDP gains. I ask the Irish Presidency to apply that same logic now that it holds the pen.

There is a second cost that no negotiating box shows. Under Horizon Europe 71 percent of high-quality proposals are turned away. These are not marginal ideas, and turning them away has a price. We are in a defining era. Technological development in quantum, in AI, in advanced materials, in biotech, in photonics, all of these are not only about competitiveness and improving the lives of our people, but about our safety and security. At the same time, industrial strength, the ability to produce clean energy, to develop the medicines of tomorrow, to secure our own supply chains — none of this happens without sustained public investment in research. It is Europe's capacity to remain a sovereign actor in a world where the core technologies and industries of the future are being shaped right now, and where dependence on others comes at a strategic cost. With this proposal the Irish Presidency signals that Europe is willing to fall behind in those races. It signals that Europe accepts dependencies on the United States and China across the industries and the core technologies of the future.

Research is one of the few lines in the EU budget that pays back many times over and without which Europe has no future competitiveness or resilience. Cutting it to balance a negotiating box means cutting the very investment that makes future budgets easier to finance. We call on Heads of State and Government to secure at least €177 billion (or €200 billion in current prices) for Horizon Europe. We would furthermore like to recall that the consent of the Parliament is needed for a new MFF and this

requires an absolute majority of the Parliament to support the MFF. Every vote will count to get to this majority and cutting FP10 will cost votes.