

Preliminary views for main objectives and priorities for FP10 in MFF 2028-2034

The Research Council of Finland and Business Finland

Summary of our main messages:

Safeguarding the Union's global competitiveness can only be reached by investing in RDI on par with our competitors, meaning an **ambitious budget** of FP10.

Producing the critical impact in the form of new knowledge, technologies and solutions, FP10 must be solely driven by the principles and criteria of **Excellence and Quality**.

New and more effective mechanisms to increase Widening are needed, but we should consider financing these actions from a separate **widening budget outside of FP**.

Given the serious challenges our societies now face, FP10 must maintain a **clear focus on RDI**, while e.g. investments and other (non-RDI) activities could be implemented in other EU programmes. We also recognize the importance of take up and exploitation as well as the creation of new business models, and these should be seen as a coherent set of actions.

While it is important to adopt a balanced combination of curiosity- and mission-driven approaches in our efforts to strengthen competitiveness, we question the role, RDI relevance and subsequent impact of EU **missions** within the FP, and propose assessing thoroughly whether they have met their ambitious goals during the first half of Horizon Europe and if an overall coordination of mission activities between different EU programmes could be organized outside FP10. A possible reorganisation of missions should be done without extracting funds from FP10.

Instrumentation and implementation should build on the decades-long experience from the past FPs and thus be built on **continuation of best practices**, while continuingly striving for **easier participation**.

While **co-funding mechanism** (especially in partnerships) is likely to continue, the practices should be drastically improved and simplified.

1. With high level of ambition in terms of budget and goals, FP10 should focus on high quality research and innovation driven by excellence

The global race for technological dominance does not wait for better economic times. Thus, to keep EU competitive while its competitors invest much more and much faster in strategic knowledge, technologies, products, solutions and capacities, we have to raise the level of ambition and the budget of FP10.

While there are many needs that FP10 must address, perhaps the most urgent ones are related to geopolitical challenges resulting in the need to strengthen our security, economic competitiveness and strategic autonomy. At the same time, climate change poses the most serious long-term threat to humanity. Given the urgency of these challenges and amount of investments needed to address them, FP10 should focus on funding research and innovation by criteria of excellence and quality.

In terms of efficiency, the role of national and EU level funding should be clarified. It is clear that competitiveness within the EU-level calls stems from prior national or regional investments in RDI, it is no surprise that the past 20 years of widening have not produced the expected outcome. Although the aim is still very pertinent, the mechanisms should be reconsidered and achieving the 3% target for RDI spending should be further encouraged. The EU should fund only excellence in FP10, but widening actions financed by a widening budget could link into relevant actions that stimulate national investments in RDI.

2. FP10: a coherent programme portfolio providing support from research to scaling up and investments to increase system level impact and efficiency

The development towards a more coherent portfolio of programmes supporting activities from research to exploitation including investments has been very positive in this MFF. While FP10 should focus on research and innovation, further strengthening links and synergies to other European programmes should be continued, to improve impact and efficacy of increasingly tight budgets.

At the same time, the approach to security and defence should be reconsidered. To maximise impact and efficient use of public funds, development of dual use technologies could be considered in FP10 when the technology in question is in its scope anyway.

3. Focus on European and international collaboration with dedicated instruments for most excellent European researchers and companies

The level of ambition must remain high for scientific, technological and industrial output and competitiveness of Europe, also in collaboration with its strategic allies in global context. The added value of the FP that cannot be achieved by national or private efforts is

European collaboration. This should remain in the core of the future FP, while recognizing the need for continuous support to most excellent researchers and companies through ERC and EIC.

At the moment, Europe is far from reaching the 3% R&D investment target, and FP10 can yield a significant leverage from private sector.

To achieve the ambitious objectives, it is necessary to adopt a balanced approach that fully embraces industrial competitiveness and innovation without neglecting the role of frontier research and the global challenges. Europe still needs to improve and speed up the valorisation of the continent's R&I investments, and the Framework Programme is the tool to achieve this.

4. Effective implementation and further simplification to ease participation

All measures that decrease unnecessary bureaucracy for the applicants and thus ease participation of new participants should be considered.

If co-fund mechanisms are to be widely used in different actions (currently in Digital Europe, European Defence Fund, some Horizon Europe partnerships and Innovation Ecosystems etc.), creating comprehensive overview as early as possible would help Member States' level planning of budgets and practices. Overall, the implementation (of co-funded partnerships, for example) has been ineffective and needs to be repowered, made more transparent, and less bureaucratic.

5. More strategic and structured support to innovation

While the instruments providing support to bottom-up science, applied and collaborative research are tried and established, the same does not apply for innovation and scale up of research results. Given the ongoing race for technology development and ownership, Europe should take a more strategic approach to supporting innovation and reorganize the relevant instruments accordingly.

EIC Accelerator addresses a real market gap and has earned its place in the future FP. It should build on proven mechanisms with simple and solid functions (vs. frequent changes and complex set of resubmission rules, overly descriptive Challenge calls, fast tracks and plug ins etc. seen in the early years of Horizon Europe). Instead of incorporating research and scale-up services in one package, future EIC (Accelerator and Transition) should focus on commercialization and scale-up of most potential research results that arise from any low TRL instrument in any EU or national programme. In addition, the current EIC Pathfinder that represents multidimensional collaborative research seeking for breakthrough technologies should be repositioned and strengthened in the excellence pillar.

The true relevance and efficacy of EIE and EIT in supporting European innovation are not as clear and call for a major reform or replacement with more impact-driven instruments.