



MINISTRY OF CULTURE
AND INNOVATION

Hungary's position towards the next EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme

1. Strong, independent Framework Programme (FP) with a stable, but flexible budget, interconnected with strategic competitiveness priorities

Hungary advocates for a well-funded, independent, and strategically aligned EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, emphasizing transparent dialogue, and a balance between strategic objectives and beneficiary flexibility to enhance European competitiveness.

2. Leveraging the R&I potential of all Member States

Additional efforts are needed to expand participation in FP and fully leverage the EU's research and innovation potential. Addressing the current innovation gap within the EU is essential for its resilience and strategic autonomy. Thus, Hungary calls for substantial changes to improve the participation of all Member States in the Framework Programme, to ensure a more balanced distribution of funds, and fine-tune the "Widening" programme.

3. Enhanced innovation, increased valorisation and advanced commercialization of research results

Maximizing the societal and economic benefits of Research and Innovation (R&I) in the next FP depends on effective knowledge valorisation. The Framework Programme should foster a mindset shift towards entrepreneurship by enhancing skills in outreach, exploitation, and valorisation of research results, expanding training initiatives, and strategically using intellectual property rights to drive innovation and competitiveness in the European R&I ecosystem. Technological innovation should be funded foremost and most importantly through venture capital. Therefore, to effectively accelerate the European Deep Tech ecosystem, FP10 should aim for the development of the European venture capital ecosystem.

4. Applicant-centred Simplification

A profound simplification is vital for the success of the FP10. Simplified rules, streamlined processes and more training could help reduce administrative burdens, making it easier for researchers, organizations and businesses from all countries to engage with the programme.

5. Research and Technology Infrastructures

Large-scale European Research and Technology Infrastructures (RTIs) are vital for advancing cutting-edge research and safeguarding Europe's competitive edge. It is imperative to ensure their broad accessibility both for researchers and industrial users. To secure the long-term financial sustainability of RTIs, robust support measures at the EU level are essential.

6. European Partnerships

The next Framework Programme should enhance transparency, streamline European Partnerships by reducing administrative burdens, ensure inclusive governance, and improve regional representation to better address diverse challenges across Member States.

7. Importance of EU-wide collaborations

Pillar II is crucial part of the Framework Programme as it can possibly generate Europe-wide collaborations focused on the different societal, economic and environmental challenges faced. Therefore, it is important to secure the continuous funding for collaborative projects, while ensuring that all talent and ideas from all Member States or Associated Countries can participate in these projects. FP10 should have a focused programme structure that is capable of providing real solutions to the most significant European economic and societal challenges.

8. Dual-use

Dual-use research can foster technological advancements that enhance Europe's strategic autonomy, resilience, and global competitiveness when developed responsibly. Though the Framework Programme shall not be targeted on dual-use, it should not exclude.

9. European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology plays a crucial role in driving innovation and competitiveness by connecting ecosystem actors, building ecosystems, supporting start-ups and enabling them to stay in their region, as well as fostering knowledge transfer through its key instruments. Therefore, the independence of the EIT must be preserved, and its activities must continue and be aligned with other synergetic instruments.

The EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation are running now for more than 40 years. Hungary recognises their importance and crucial added value in funding excellent research, enabling Europe-wide R&I collaboration, paving the pathway towards innovation and knowledge valorisation, as well as building important capacities of the actors of the R&I ecosystem. Before engaging in the negotiations of the next Multiannual Financial Frame, Hungary advocates for an independent FP10 – in line with Article 182 of the TFEU and the recently published Warsaw Declaration on the Strategic Role of the Future R&I Framework Programme.

The 10th European Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10), covering the period from 2028 to 2034, shall play a pivotal role in shaping the future landscape of European research and innovation (R&I). As we move beyond Horizon Europe, it is crucial to build on the experiences gained from previous programmes and rely on data and assessments on the efficiency and impact of previous programmes. FP10 should build on the successes of previous Framework Programmes while addressing their limitations.

Key messages

1. Strong, independent Framework Programme with a stable, but flexible budget and interconnected with strategic competitiveness priorities

At the last meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 29th November 2024 during the Hungarian Presidency, ministers responsible for research agreed that **research and innovation should be placed at the heart of all EU policies** in order to face the challenges posed by the global competition. Therefore Hungary is committed to have a strong and independent Framework Programme whose strategic objectives are in line with strategic priorities aiming to increase the competitiveness of the EU and of each Member State.

Supporting R&I activities within a single, well-integrated program can enable smooth and continuous support across the entire value chain, ensuring that ideas from fundamental research reach the market through consecutive funding schemes. Moreover, the Programme must be provided with a stable and flexible budget, which must be exclusively aimed at reaching R&I policy goals.

Both the framing and the content of the Framework Programme necessitates more **co-creation and transparent dialogue** among the European Commission and the co-legislators from the very beginning of designing the programme, through the negotiations on the legislative-proposal, the programming and the whole implementation period. We urge the Commission to ensure a timely release of proposals to prevent unnecessary delays and guarantee Member States' effective involvement in the process.

Moreover, from our view, in the next Framework Programme it is important to find adequate balance between **strategic calls requiring broad Europe-wide consortia and less prescriptive calls encouraging a broader range of scientific approaches from beneficiaries**. This means that agreeing on the strategic objectives of the programme will be of crucial importance to ensure the FP's strong contribution to the increased European competitiveness. However, it will be also important to enable beneficiaries to address the challenges through the most relevant bottom-up research and innovation activities.

2. Leveraging the R&I potential of all Member States

Additional efforts must be made to expand participation in the FP and fully leverage the EU's research and innovation potential. We firmly believe that addressing the current innovation gap within the EU is essential for its resilience and strategic autonomy.

Despite all efforts of previous Framework Programmes, there are still significant inequalities regarding the participation of Member States.

Therefore, one of the basic principle of the Framework Programme shall be inclusiveness in all its aspects while preserving excellence and mission-driven principles to ensure that the programme effectively strengthen research and innovation cooperation at the EU level. All entities from all Member States shall be entitled to receive European funding if their proposal meets the necessary criteria by passing the evaluation. No disagreements at higher political levels, nor conditions tied to performance indicators shall limit the participation of EU beneficiaries. An inclusive research environment can promote excellence, widen participation and reduce disparities, and thus the benefits of knowledge can be shared widely.

Furthermore, in the next Framework Programme additional efforts has to be done to ensure the inclusive and balanced involvement of researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, experts and research manager and support professionals in the different networks, platforms, and initiatives to enable their access to these networks and better connectedness across Europe.

The relevance of the Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence Programme in Horizon Europe is well-acknowledged, as for several Member States it proved to provide important schemes to increase their participation in Horizon Europe. However, the innovation gap within the EU still persists, therefore further actions are needed by keeping those measures that proved to be successful. When evaluating and shaping the design of these schemes, it is important to keep in mind the budget share of beneficiaries of the Widening programme and strive to shift this in order to benefit more the targeted countries.

Misconceptions about Widening Member States must be also dispelled: these countries are not lagging in research excellence but rather in international visibility and participation in competitive programmes. Therefore, the objectives of the Widening initiative should not be pursued through separate instruments but integrated into all instruments of the next R&I Framework Programme. Efforts to expand Widening opportunities should not operate in isolation; rather, they must actively foster genuine opportunities for regions that are underrepresented. Established and successful initiatives, such as the Twinning action, which have demonstrated their effectiveness in promoting strategic collaborations that facilitate participation in Horizon Europe, should be preserved and continued.

It is also important to change the used expression as several countries perceive the term “widening” in a negative manner. The change of the expression suggested by Manuel Heitor, i.e. “advancing Europe” could be a viable solution to be in line with the rationale of the whole programme, namely, by overcoming the innovation gap within Europe, the whole European R&I ecosystem can advance.

Another important scheme of the Widening Programme is the COST programme. Hungary strongly advocates for continuing COST, thus providing excellent networking, training and knowledge exchange opportunity not only for researchers, but innovators, entrepreneurs, and R&I stakeholders to generate new R&I projects. It would be also important from time to time to call for targeted actions beside sole research actions. In this way, not only researchers, but also professionals working in the diverse fields of research management and support could get opportunity to exchange best practices, attend job-shadowing, peer-to-peer exchanges that could all contribute to increase their skills, competences, thus the functioning of research support at research performing organisations.

3. Enhanced innovation, increased valorisation and advanced commercialization of research results

Maximizing the societal and economic benefits of research and innovation in the next FP depends on effective knowledge valorisation.

Technological innovation should be funded foremost and most importantly through venture capital. Therefore, to effectively accelerate the European Deep Tech ecosystem, strengthening the venture capital market – and also the drastic simplification of the state aid rules of VC funds established from EU or national government funds – should be the first step in developing financing R&I activities that should be included in a new Framework Programme.

Furthermore, the Framework Programme shall change the current situation when most researchers are not interested in making their results widely available, exploited and valorised. They have little experience and interest in identifying target audiences and outreach channels, in developing a unique value proposition and business plan around these. Therefore important skill development and change of mindset towards entrepreneurship can play a significant role in strengthening the competitiveness of both the national and the European R&I ecosystem. By expanding the outreach of current initiatives, such as the EIT academies, the Booster and WiderAdvance, etc., throughout training and capacity building is needed reinforcing the exploitation and valorisation of research results as well. Upscaling similar EIT activities and launching a dedicated sub-programme, such as “Entrepreneurial Skills for Researchers” by EIT, would help researchers develop their entrepreneurial skills.

By focusing on the strategic use of intellectual property rights, the FP can help transform scientific discoveries into market-ready innovations, thereby enhancing competitiveness and fostering sustainability.

4. Simplification

A profound simplification is vital for the success of FP10. Simplified rules and streamlined processes could help reduce administrative burdens, making it easier for researchers, organizations, and businesses from all countries to engage with the programme.

Given the fact that the ratio of newcomers and SMEs engaged in the FP still did not meet the expectations, it remains crucial to take further steps to leverage the potential of all actors of the European R&I ecosystems. For several actors, especially companies, start-ups, participation in the Framework Programme often does not appear as a real option, as it usually takes 6–9 months to prepare a project as a coordinator, and almost the same time to get into a consortium that is considered successful. This length is inconsistent with business planning periods and rapid innovation cycles: especially in the case of digital innovation, where there is a risk that the research challenge identified in the application will become obsolete by the time the application is awarded. In many cases, the extra work invested is not worthwhile for the researcher (as do not get success fee or additional payment if the project is successful), and a specialist in proposal writing is not available or affordable.

Moreover, the lack of proposal writing expertise often distracts from the scientific excellence, leading to a situation where institutions with innovative ideas, but insufficient resources to work with costly consulting firms for proposal development, face significantly lower prospects of achieving high scores. The proposal template should follow the applicant's logic focusing on the idea, proposed methodology, as well as the responsible and realistic implementation. Specifically, grant applications under Co-Funded European Partnership calls and Horizon Europe Pillar 2 calls should be submitted by using the same, simplified proposal template. Additionally, Co-Funded EU Partnership calls should appear on the EU Funding & Tenders portal.

Therefore it is important to make FP participation more attractive for researchers and innovators as well as research-intensive organisations across Europe by allowing them to effectively absorb costs (even justify higher personnel costs), increasing success rates and shortening the time to grant.

The average success rate for the programme is 17%, slightly higher than for H2020. Nevertheless, this still means that more than four-fifths of proposals do not receive funding. In Horizon Europe, there were far too much calls, which were far too descriptive and granted only one proposal per call. As a result, important resources of research performing organisations were wasted. Therefore, the next Framework Programme shall reduce the resources needed to prepare proposals on the applicant side by funding several winning proposals under one call. By increasing the number of projects funded under one call and enabling smaller consortia to address challenges through different means, better geographical coverage can be guaranteed. Moreover, more tailor-made solutions to a given problem at European level can be developed addressing different needs of different regions and countries. Such solutions are more easily adoptable and adaptable across Europe.

NCPs are crucial to reach out and support beneficiaries at national levels, therefore the Commission should provide more training for them.

At institutional levels, it is important to keep in mind that excellent research requires excellent research support. Europe-wide CSAs are needed targeting different cross-cutting issues (research management in general, but also science communication, IPR issues, Open science, innovation management, etc.) to empower research managers and support professionals through networking, job-shadowing, training and upskilling. Besides, it is also crucial to recognise their work. Therefore, reasonable amount of costs of research management should be eligible within the budget.

5. Research and Technology Infrastructures (RTIs)

Large-scale European Research and Technology Infrastructures (RTIs) are vital for advancing cutting-edge research and safeguarding Europe's competitive edge. It is imperative to ensure their effective utilization by guaranteeing broad accessibility for both researchers and industrial users across all Europe. Financial incentives for the private sector would involve them better in infrastructure maintenance.

To secure the long-term financial sustainability of RTIs, robust support measures at the EU level are essential primarily through the Framework Programme. Research and Technology Infrastructures should be introduced as cross-cutting issue to ensure support, synergy and secure the relevant capacities.

Moreover, transnational cooperation of small and medium-sized RTIs should be enabled and encouraged through the next Framework Programme to ensure their interconnectedness contributing to Europe's competitiveness.

Enabling the training and networking of human resources working with RTIs is necessary, as skilled personnel and training in managing research infrastructures are also key factors. Beside the long-term financial sustainability, enhancing synergies with national research infrastructure funding schemes is vital.

6. European Partnerships

The next Framework Programme should enhance transparency and simplification, streamline European Partnerships by reducing overlaps and administrative burdens, ensure inclusive governance, and improve regional representation to better address diverse challenges across Member States.

European Partnerships under Horizon Europe are important means of supporting specific themes, involving different actors in of the ecosystem, funding small and large strategic projects as well as generating additional investments from national and private sources. However, it is also important to underline that there is a need for more transparency and simplification in this area, both in terms of strategic planning, implementation and related administration.

Thus, the next Framework Programme should rationalise these schemes through several aspects. First, simplifying the funding matrices and creating an intuitive, flexible framework is essential to make it easier to assess and allocate funding with fewer complexities. Moreover, the administrative burden placed by European Partnerships on research funding organisations must be significantly reduced by applying the same requirements, templates, and

platforms for application, evaluation and implementation. Third, European Partnerships have to be ready to react to the different needs and challenges faced only by a certain group of Member States and Associated Countries. This means that, on the one hand, the composition of their governing board should be representative. On the other hand, they should strive to reach out to beneficiaries from all Member States to ensure that the granted projects can address different regional challenges, if relevant.

7. Importance of EU-wide collaborations

Pillar II. represents an important added value of Framework Programmes as it can possibly generate Europe-wide collaborations focused on challenges faced. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure the continuous funding for collaborative projects, while ensuring that all talent and ideas from all Member States or Associated Countries can participate in these projects.

Better participation of newcomers could be eased through numerous efforts. The next Framework Programme should establish evaluation mechanisms that address unconscious bias against lesser-known applicants while keeping excellence and impact as main criteria. Thus, greater emphasis should be placed on blind evaluation processes to minimize biases and foster a more equitable competitive environment.

Moreover, Pillar II. is "over-programmed" and overly complex due to the intention to integrate a myriad of policy priorities and additional strategic plans. Overly detailed requirements and expectations do not allow for meaningful buy-in from newcomers. The bottom-up approach to project design allows more scope for incorporating new innovative ideas and approaches from the scientific and innovation community into projects. It is important to reduce the detailed requirements for project implementation in calls for proposals and leave more room for competitive and innovative ideas. Calls should focus more on challenges and expected objectives ('challenge based approach'). Small projects could be easier and more accessible than at present, especially for less experienced applicants, while large projects could be used for broader, more strategic collaborations. The importance of inclusiveness has to be stressed again when it comes to the major projects; the challenges the EU is facing need the involvement and contribution of all Member States.

8. Dual-use

Dual-use research can foster technological advancements that enhance Europe's strategic autonomy, resilience, and global competitiveness when developed responsibly. Though the Framework Programme shall not be targeted on dual-use, it should not exclude.

In the current geopolitical context, the dual-use potential of research offers significant opportunities for both innovation and security. By leveraging research that can serve both civilian and military purposes, we can foster technological advancements that contribute to economic growth, resilience, and defence capabilities. Dual-use technologies have the potential to enhance Europe's strategic autonomy, enabling the development of cutting-edge solutions that can address both societal needs and national security challenges. When approached responsibly, these technologies can create synergies that strengthen both the economy and security, ultimately benefiting a wide range of sectors and reinforcing Europe's competitive edge on the global stage.

9. The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology plays a crucial role in driving innovation and competitiveness by connecting ecosystem actors, building ecosystems, supporting start-ups and enabling them to stay in their region, but also to access new markets, as well as fostering knowledge transfer through its key instruments. Therefore, the independence of the EIT must be preserved, and its activities must continue and be aligned with other synergetic instruments. The EIT should be leveraged as an asset for bringing innovations to market in EU priority thematic areas through existing EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) and the establishment of new EIT KICs.

It is important to maintain the prominent role of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) in tackling urgent societal challenges, demonstrably strengthening the EU and its Member States' capacity to innovate and grow. This is done by connecting the different actors in the innovation ecosystem and creating platforms for cooperation and transfer of

knowledge, good practices, skills and competences that are essential to strengthen the competitiveness of research-intensive institutions, start-ups, SMEs and industrial actors. Three main instruments of the EIT are widely recognised and impactful, as follows: 1) Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), 2) Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS), as well as 3) EIT academies.

Since 2010, the EIT has been enhancing Europe's competitiveness, and filling the innovation and skills gaps throughout the continent, by building pan-European innovation partnerships. Its approach connects organisations from business, education and research from across Europe in ten thematic EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). The EIT's first three KICs (EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Digital, and EIT InnoEnergy) have already achieved financial sustainability, which highlights the EIT's ability to deliver significant return on investment.

It should also be highlighted that the EIT has one of the highest leverage effects in Horizon Europe. According to the BMR report¹, 'KICs stand out with a full leverage of 5.6, followed by Co-programmed Partnerships with 3.55, Co-funded Partnerships with 2.21, and Institutionalised Partnerships (excluding KICs) with 1.64.'

The EIT RIS has been at the forefront of the EU's efforts to support and accelerate innovation excellence across Europe, involving successfully modest and emerging innovation countries in the EIT KICs' activities. These activities proved to be crucial to enable start-ups to grow in their region that is crucial for closing the innovation gap and increasing the competitiveness of Europe. The EIT should build on the acknowledged success of the RIS and the Commission should investigate how its elements could be built in other Institutionalised European Partnerships, in order to make them more open and inclusive.

The added value of the EIT has been recognised by the European Commission by entrusting it with the establishment of Net-Zero Industry Academies. EU Skills Academies delivered by the EIT proved to be successful in reinforcing entrepreneurial and risk taking skills by providing essential up- and re-skilling

¹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/events/upcoming-events/biennial-monitoring-report-bmr-2024-partnerships-horizon-europe-launch-2024-09-19_en

unique education offer for the European workforce. They are flexible and tailor-made capacity-building instruments addressing the market-and sector needs in terms of skills, set up not only for students but also for professionals. Their role should be reinforced by making them the Commission's educational and training arm in selected critical industry sectors.
