

Scientific research is a strategic necessity for resilience and competitiveness in Europe

EU-LIFE's input to the EC "Call for evidence" - 2025 Strategic Foresight Report

At a pivotal moment for Europe, the [European Commission's consultation on the 2025 Strategic Foresight Report](#) seeks input from stakeholders on how to strengthen Europe's long-term resilience. We hereby provide EU-LIFE's vision that, **as a crucial part of competitiveness, scientific research is a strategic necessity for the resilience of Europe; and recall the 5 key actions that the EU must prioritize to empower research in this role.**

Scientific research as a strategic need

As outlined in the European Commission's call, resilience is not just about withstanding crises, but also about enabling Europe to thrive in response to adversity in a sustainable, fair, and democratic manner. However, achieving such resilience requires a solid foundation. Scientific research provides that foundation, being indispensable for ensuring Europe's competitiveness, innovation capacity, strategic autonomy and long-term sustainability.

By investing in generating knowledge and fostering scientific talent, Europe seeds the innovations of tomorrow that will drive economic growth, high-quality jobs, and deliver solutions to global challenges - from clean energy to biomedical breakthroughs. Therefore, if Europe wants to be truly resilient in 2040 and beyond, it must now empower the scientific discovery and innovation that will equip the continent to anticipate challenges, develop evidence-based solutions, and adapt to unforeseen crises in years to come.

While **the minimum basis for a thriving European Research & Innovation is a stand-alone, well budgeted FP10, we urge the European Commission to further follow the 5 key actions for a competitive – and, thus, resilient – Europe** [outlined by EU-LIFE in October 2024](#) and exposed below.

5 key actions for a competitive – and resilient – Europe

Be ambitious, yet realistic - on what to expect from Research & Innovation

As hinted by the Draghi, Letta and Heitor reports and mission letters to the EU Commissioners, Europe needs to aim for greater impact through its R&I programmes. This means to be ambitious and aim for longer-term, more impactful outcomes: more focus on research and more innovation, compared to the current (Horizon Europe) programme which has a too strong focus on implementation.¹⁻³ At the same time, be realistic and acknowledge that the aims can only be achieved by raising the investment as clearly stated in Draghi's and Heitor Group's reports: double the investment on R&I - and ring-fence it through the whole financial cycle.^{1-3,6-8} However, doubling the investment to at least €220 billion would only be sufficient if the current R&I portfolio is maintained. If the portfolio increases, e.g. by including priorities such as industrial strategies and defence, the investment must further increase. As innovation stems from high-risk high-gain approaches, ensure the doubling of the investment on the European Research Council (ERC) and increase the budget for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)⁴ and the European Innovation Council (EIC), particularly on the earlier stages of innovation⁵.

Empower the ecosystem - of European Research & Innovation

Be mindful on how scientific processes work and promote the ways that truly support a flourishing R&I ecosystem to face global challenges, in realistic timelines. As underlined in the reports as well as in the mission letters of the Commissioners, invest in people and promote talent. This should be achieved through investing in rewarding research careers, effective knowledge transfer and cutting-edge research infrastructure. Similarly, improve excellence of research institutions in a quality-based, open, equitable, fair and diverse way, be it through existing or new mechanisms such as Draghi's "ERC for institutions" idea.²⁻³ These elements will be key to embrace the fifth freedom put forward by Letta's report, creating freedom of movement of knowledge and innovation through meaningful collaboration between universities, research institutes and businesses. This is how R&I contributes to a strong European industrial strategy: by strengthening the European Research Area.

Ensure coherence - of the EU R&I programme

Ensure coherence of the R&I programme. Scattered, non-cohesive instruments hidden in between other strategic objectives of the EU will not provide the needed European leverage on competitiveness and innovation. Whereas the ERC and the EIC have been clearly recognized as centrepieces for the future of research by Draghi's report and Ursula von der Leyen's mission letters, a deafening silence was cast upon the essential MSCA programme, only attenuated by the Heitor group's report. Along with the ERC²⁻³ and the EIC⁵, the MSCA⁴ programme as a key instrument to attract, develop, and retain talent⁴ must remain a priority in the upcoming financial cycle. Importantly, all three must be grouped coherently in a R&I single umbrella that prioritises independent, expert-driven governance. However, do not fall into the trap of considering that these excellent programmes will deliver high impact without excellent research infrastructure and clear investment in bottom-up, discovery-driven and quality-driven collaborative research across Europe and globally.^{1,9-13}

Strike the right balance - between directionality and bottom-up

Find a balance between the need to streamline priorities and the need to allow for discoveries to flourish in Europe. The reason why public and private funding should invest in R&I lies in its contribution to the competitiveness of the economy, a safer and more sustainable environment, the wellbeing and the prosperity of citizens. Contextualizing R&I, therefore, is important. However, this cannot mean an obsessed focus on directionality, i.e. top-down policies on how and when researchers and innovators shall develop new ideas and solutions. On the contrary, strong, resilient and impactful excellent research requires a clear bottom-up approach with researchers and innovators in the driving seat. Similarly, public and private investments must be balanced wisely. Make sure to invest public funding where the private sector cannot step in: the high risk/high reward parts of the R&I cycle.²⁻³ Industrial strategies should not overshadow the critical need to invest public funding in fundamental research.

Keep it simple - on structure

Revolutionise R&I by translating political recognition of its worth into financial investments, but do not pulverize the structure of European R&I programmes. Plan for an evolution of Horizon Europe that breaks siloes inside the programme and contributes further to the common effort of making a healthy and prosperous Europe.

Relevant EU-LIFE position papers referenced in the text

Horizon Europe strategy

¹ [EU-LIFE answer to the Public Consultation of EU R&I Programmes 2014 – 2027](#)

Future Framework Programme

³ [Towards FP10: EU-LIFE's guiding principles for FP10](#)

⁴ [Towards FP10: EU-LIFE reply to High-Level Group Consultation on HE and FP10](#)

⁵ [Towards FP10: EU-LIFE's vision for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions \(MSCA\)](#)

⁶ [Towards FP10: EU-LIFE's vision for the European Innovation Council \(EIC\)](#)

Horizon Europe budget

⁷ [Reaction of EU-LIFE to the next framework programme budget agreement](#)

⁸ [Europe needs Research & Innovation to address the future: EU-LIFE reaction to the EU Council deal](#)

⁹ [Open letter to the EU Council and the European Parliament to prioritise R&I by committing an appropriate budget for Horizon Europe](#)

Research Infrastructures

¹⁰ [Call for action on small and medium research infrastructures in Europe](#)

Pillar II Health Cluster

¹¹ [How to ensure health safety in Europe: the vision of EU-LIFE research institutes](#)

¹² [EU-LIFE calls for impactful collaborative research in European Biomedicine](#)

Pillar II Cancer Mission

¹³ [Reaction of EU-LIFE: Cancer Mission work programme 2021-22](#)

¹⁴ [EU-LIFE recommendations to the Cancer Mission draft](#)

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