

Follow-up to the European Parliament resolution of 11 March 2025 on the assessment of the implementation of Horizon Europe in view of its interim evaluation and recommendations for the 10th Research Framework Programme

- 1. Rapporteur:** Christian EHLER (EPP / DE)
- 2. References:** 2024/2109(INI) / A10-0021/2025 / P10_TA(2025)0028
- 3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 11 March 2025
- 4. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE)
- 5. Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution takes stock of Horizon Europe implementation and European Research and Innovation (R&I) activities, supports strong commitments to excellence-driven and agile Framework Programme, followed by more detailed observations on competitiveness, technical implementation, Pillar I, Pillar II, Part IV, and EU Missions and European partnerships. It generally welcomes the effectiveness of Horizon Europe, while also indicating a certain level of complexity and other areas where further progress and improvement is necessary during the remaining years of Horizon Europe. Lastly, the resolution presents the Parliament's position on the 10th Research Framework Programme (FP10) and makes recommendations for it.

The resolution:

- Recommends that FP10 should be a stand-alone EU programme built on instruments under Horizon Europe that have proven to be effective and efficient and makes several suggestions for the FP10 design and implementation.
- Underlines that the upcoming ERA Act should include obligations for Member States to enhance their R&I systems and overcome structural challenges, while aligning national and EU funding and increasing both public and private investments to bridge the growing gap in R&D intensity;
- Calls on the Commission to present a legislative proposal on the freedom of scientific research, following the commitment by the Commissioner in her hearing, and urges the Commission to enforce more respect for academic freedom in the EU as well as in associated countries;
- Urges the Commission to stay on course to achieve the overall climate spending target of 35 % over the full lifetime of the programme;
- Urges the Commission to report to Parliament, before the start of FP10, on the impact of the use of Do No (Significant) Harm under

Horizon Europe; and recommends that this principle should be accompanied by detailed guidance from the Commission;

- Encourages the Commission to seek and conclude other association agreements with third countries; emphasises the Parliament's role under a consent procedure for association to a specific EU programme; makes recommendations for a strategic policy framework for Commission's decisions on international collaboration; calls for the right balance between security and openness as part of the strategic approach;
- Lists several issues regarding the time-to-grant under Horizon Europe and administrative simplification; insists on the use of lump-sum funding under Horizon Europe, ensuring that it leads to genuine simplification for beneficiaries;
- Considers that Horizon Europe and Pillar II is a vital strategic tool, fostering collaboration by pooling resources and knowledge, and aligning public and private R&I agendas; acknowledges, however, its implementation is complex and should be improved.
- Urges the Commission to develop options to strengthen the synergies between civilian and defence R&D spending; calls on the Commission to explore how the exploitation of dual-use potential can be maximised, while maintaining the civilian nature of the next framework programme;
- Recalls that the Commission communication entitled 'EU Missions two years on: assessment of progress and way forward' did not constitute a positive assessment of the missions and concluded that missions had failed on core objectives such as crowding in external funding; notes that no significant changes in the implementation of the missions have taken place since the publication of the communication;
- Urges the Commission to launch, from 2025, a task force to improve the efficacy of the European Semester, in line with the EU's share towards the 3% target;
- Supports an urgent call to introduce a 'Choose Europe' co-funding pilot and to turn the current 'European brain drain' into a 'brain gain' by 2035, noting that it should be implemented urgently from 2025;
- Lists several issues regarding European Innovation Council (EIC) implementation and calls on the Commission to restore EIC autonomy and agility without delay for the remaining part of Horizon Europe;

6. Response to the requests of the European Parliament and overview of actions taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:

In response to:

Paragraphs 8 and 46, the Commission agrees that despite a lot of progress made within the field of ERA Policy Agenda during the years to bridge the

gap in R&D intensity in the EU, obstacles persist hindering the full potential of an efficient European Research Area. According to the Horizon Europe interim evaluation adopted in April 2025, the EU is struggling to achieve the R&D investment target of 3% of GDP and in 2022 would have needed to invest an additional EUR 123 billion to reach the 3% target, more than the budget of an entire seven-year framework programme for R&I. The Commission Communication of 22 October 2024 on ERA implementation (COM(2024) 490) highlights persistent issues such as disparities in RDI performance across Member States, insufficient private and public investment in RDI falling short of the 3% GDP target, insufficient knowledge and data sharing, and suboptimal pooling and prioritisation of research and technology infrastructure resources. In conclusion, the Communication underlines the need for stronger governance. Therefore, building on the recommendations made by the high-level reports such as Draghi and Letta reports, which recognise the fundamental role R&I plays in boosting competitiveness and socio-economic wellbeing, the ERA Act is announced as a Flagship Action in the Competitiveness Compass under the 'Closing the innovation gap' Pillar. The ERA Act's objectives are to strengthen R&D investment and bring it up to the 3% GDP target, focus research support more on strategic priorities, reinforce alignment between the EU and Member States' funding priorities, and foster the circulation of knowledge and talent across Europe, in line with the 5th freedom principle presented in the Letta report.

Paragraphs 10 and 56, the European Commission fully shares the Parliament's emphasis on the importance of the promotion and protection of freedom of scientific research. In this context, on 21 February 2024, then Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič communicated in writing to the President of the European Parliament, Ms Roberta Metsola, confirming that the Commission intends to follow up on Parliament's resolution with full regard to the principles of proportionality, subsidiarity and better law-making. This approach remains fully consistent with the political commitment made by President von der Leyen in her Political Guidelines concerning resolutions adopted by the European Parliament under Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

To provide a solid basis for possible future legislative action, the Commission initiated a dedicated study in October 2024. This study assesses the current protection and promotion of scientific research freedom across the EU, building on the European Parliament's previous work, including its Academic Freedom Monitor. The results will clarify the initiative's scope in line with the Union's competences under Article 4(3) TFEU. A representative of the European Parliament participates in the Study Steering Group.

In addition, shared values have also been a key consideration in the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The 2018 Paris and 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqués outlined six fundamental academic values. Between 2021 and 2024, a Working Group on

Fundamental Values was tasked by the Bologna Follow Up Group with developing a framework for monitoring and implementing the fundamental values of the EHEA. In the current working period (2024-2027), this Working Group is further developing the technical monitoring framework and will report on its progress in the 2027 Ministerial Conference. The Commission is also preparing a report on guiding principles on protecting fundamental academic values that builds on the Paris, Rome and Tirana 2024 Ministerial Communiqués and the resulting definition of six fundamental academic values.

Regarding recital 72 of the Horizon Europe Regulation, the Commission acknowledges the Parliament's concerns about the respect of academic freedom in several countries benefiting from the funding of Horizon Europe. Furthermore, the Commission notes that academic freedom and freedom of scientific research are often explicitly protected by constitutional provisions in most Member States. Looking ahead, the Commission will reflect on possible ways to better operationalise recital 72 in support of freedom of scientific research, while making sure that additional administrative burden on beneficiaries of Horizon Europe is avoided.

Paragraph 11, the Commission takes note of the European Parliament's support in relation to the high levels of climate spending in the first years of Horizon Europe. According to the Horizon Europe interim evaluation, the climate contribution of Horizon Europe was 35% by the end of 2023. By comparison, the contribution of the previous framework programme, Horizon 2020, was 32%, falling short of the 35% target. The Commission is committed to staying well on course to achieve the overall climate spending target of 35 % over the full lifetime of the programme.

Paragraphs 12, 57 and 78, the Commission modified the application template by removing a section requesting a specific reflection on 'Do no harm'. Apart from the European Innovation Council, Horizon Europe call texts no longer refer to 'Do no (significant) harm' and the taxonomy regulation. Harm to the environment is covered by the ethics self-assessment, albeit in a generic manner only. For the ethics assessment a better alignment with the requirements of Article 33(2)d, i.e. the five environmental objectives not to be harmed, might be useful. Further detailed guidance to applicants or evaluators might not be needed, as Horizon Europe calls do not refer to 'Do no harm'. Looking ahead, the Commission welcomes the expressed ambition to display the application of 'Do no (significant) harm' to R&I activities in the context of the next MFF looking for minimum burden for applicants.

Paragraphs 14 and 72, the Commission wishes to underline that international cooperation in Horizon Europe is likely to increase compared to Horizon 2020 based on the participation figures of third countries in the Programme, and number of third countries that have become associated. As of March 2025, under Horizon 2020 there were 20 129 participations by third country entities (including from Associated Countries) in 9839

Grant Agreements (GAs), with a financial contribution from the Programme of EUR 6.56 billion. In comparison, Horizon Europe already has 15 825 participations, in 5951 Grant Agreements, with a financial contribution of EUR 3.77 billion (the participation figures for Horizon 2020 cover its full duration, whereas the final figures for Horizon Europe will be available in its final evaluation no later than four years after the end of the Programme period; recent association of countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada, and the coming associations of Switzerland and the Republic of Korea to the Programme are not yet reflected in these figures). As for association, 19 third countries have already associated to Horizon Europe, including global partners which did not have this opportunity in past R&I Framework Programmes (Canada and New Zealand). An additional three will become associated in 2025 – Switzerland, the Republic of Korea and Egypt, whereas negotiations with Japan are ongoing. The number of Associated Countries in Horizon Europe is expected to reach between 22-25, whereas in Horizon 2020 the number was 16.

The European Parliament, as the Union's co-legislator, has a decisive role in establishing the rules and conditions for the association policy that are embedded in the Horizon Europe Regulation. Moreover, an association agreement that establishes key parameters of an association is presented for the consent of the European Parliament, and it can only be amended with its consent. The future protocols that establish the association of third countries to a specific Union Programme will only implement the conditions set up in the relevant Basic Acts and association agreement, as agreed by the Union's co-legislators. The Commission will continue keeping the Parliament informed of all stages of new association agreements and will ensure that all essential elements of association agreements with third countries covered by Article 16(1)d of the Horizon Europe Regulation are presented for its consent, before concluding the Agreements. Strong cooperation with the Parliament and timely provision of information will be maintained also in full compliance with the 2010 Framework Agreement.

There are ongoing internal reflections in the Commission based on evaluation studies, expert reports and input received from Member States, Associated Countries, other partner countries and other stakeholders on the future design of the international cooperation, including the association policy, when it comes to future EU funding for R&I. These reflections will consider the new elements introduced in the association policy of Horizon Europe, lessons learnt, and the rapidly developing geopolitical context. This implies keeping the multilateral, regional and bilateral approach and being more strategically selective, where necessary, including by more systematically targeting the countries with which the EU has a strategic interest to work on certain technology development/research fields, based on a more in-depth analysis, in combination with more effective measures on research security. Association, which for more than 30 years has been the closest R&I

cooperation tool the Union has with third countries in the Framework Programme, will continue being offered to the Union's closest partners.

Paragraphs 16 and 74, the Commission takes note of the Parliament's considerations regarding the results of the public consultation on the White Paper on options for enhancing support for research and development involving technologies with dual-use potential and recalls its summary report published in September 2024 ([R&D on dual-use technologies – options for support](#)). From further contacts with stakeholders, the Commission considers that stakeholders' views are evolving hand-in-hand with the developments of the international context and the EU response to it. Further to the adoption of the White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030, the Commission has presented a proposal to amend the Horizon Europe Regulation to allow the EIC Accelerator to support dual-use applications and, for equity support under STEP, defence applications¹. In preparation of the next MFF, the Commission has considered the potential implications of options, ranging from maintaining the exclusive focus on civil applications to embracing dual use under the civilian part of the successor of Horizon Europe, as suggested in the report of the Commission Expert Group on the Interim Evaluation of Horizon Europe. This reflection benefitted from the results of a high-level policy report from the Expert Group on the Economic and Societal Impact of Research and Innovation (ESIR) on the implications of allowing dual-use research in future EU funding to R&I in terms of economic and societal impact, as well as of a technical report of individual experts on civil-defence synergies, practical implementation of dual use and international benchmarks.

The Commission acknowledges the importance of maximising synergies between civilian and defence R&D spending, as raised in the Parliament's resolution. The Commission also agrees with the importance of respecting academic freedom, addressed in more detail in the reply to para 10 and 56, as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, regarding the choice of research subjects.

Paragraphs 24, 26, 27, 53, the Commission underlines that, according to the Horizon Europe interim evaluation, Horizon Europe's average time-to-Grant (TTG) is 240 days and is thus meeting the target of 245 days, even though it takes longer than under Horizon 2020, where the average achieved was 187 days. This difference between Horizon Europe and Horizon 2020 narrows when excluding the EIC and the SME Instrument from the Time-to-Grant calculations, with respective results of 241 days and 209 days.

¹ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) 2021/694, (EU) 2021/695, (EU) 2021/697, (EU) 2021/1153, (EU) 2023/1525 and 2024/795, as regards incentivising defence-related investments in the EU budget to implement the ReArm Europe Plan, 2025/0103 (COD).

The Commission shares the opinion that simplification must be for the benefit of applicants, while ensuring that applications contain all the information needed for the evaluation of their excellence. Under Horizon Europe, the use of lump sum funding as a simplification measure has been gradually extended, building on previous, generally positive assessments. According to the interim evaluation's evidence, adding up administrative time savings (reporting burden reduction) and avoided certificates on the financial statements, and only considering the grants that have been signed to date (including ERC Proof of Concepts), lump sum funding is estimated to have secured savings for beneficiaries between EUR 49.8 million and EUR 63.4 million, to be generated over the project lifetime. This corresponds to 14% to 30% of the lump sum beneficiaries' total administrative costs.

The Commission shares the view that there are various opinions and experiences among different beneficiaries regarding the functionality of lump sums. More specifically, according to the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe, lump sum grants are particularly welcomed by beneficiaries of grants of up to EUR 10 million and with a consortium size of up to 20 participants. There is no evidence that lump sum funding is only suitable for some organisations but not for others. The Commission's 2024 lump sum assessment shows that lump sums are very popular across all types of organisations, including research organisations and universities. Moreover, there is no evidence that the quality of funded projects suffers when using lump sums. Over 75% of evaluation experts confirmed that the quality remains the same as proposals for grants using actual costs.

The Commission does not share the view that the data presented in the 2024 lump sum assessment are unclear. This report provides the most thorough analysis of lump sum funding so far, covering implementation and payment data as well as surveys among all lump sum participants. Specifically:

- Ex-post controls of lump sum grants have started only recently and could, therefore, not be part of the 2024 assessment. However, the Commission has formally clarified that lump sum grants will not be subject to financial checks and audits. In case of an ex-post control, lump sum beneficiaries will have to demonstrate proper implementation of the grant (i.e. they have no new or additional obligation compared with standard grants).
- Regarding the number of work packages, the report found that some lump sum beneficiaries made use of the option to split work packages, while others did not. This option is entirely voluntary, and there is no reason to assume that the workload increases when beneficiaries make use of it.

The Commission takes note that the Parliament insists on the use of lump-sum funding under Horizon Europe. According to the interim evaluation, the main simplification potential targeting the administrative burden at project implementation stage is expected to come from lump sum funding.

The potential for future simplification from lump sum funding in the remaining years of Horizon Europe is expected to add between EUR 276 million and EUR 351 million in reporting burden reduction. The Commission is committed to continuous monitoring of lump sum grants and improvement of the process if needed.

Paragraphs 30, 37, 50, the Commission underlines that the objective of the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe is to analyse the programme's design, implementation and first results, as well as to support the implementation of current EU R&I measures and the design of future measures. The findings of Horizon Europe interim evaluation indicate that the programme's internal coherence is hindered by a high number of instruments. In Pillar II, there are a number of impact-oriented streams of activities under way (the EU Missions, European Partnerships, and clusters), each with its own governance and often weak links between themselves (in particular between the EU Missions and European Partnerships). Nevertheless, Pillar II projects achieve a broad technology readiness levels (TRL) coverage: from mostly TRL 2, 3 and 4 at the project start to primarily TRL 5, 6 and 7 at the project end (based on 12% projects reporting so far). Furthermore, Pillar II involves 70% of all SME unique participants, and a majority of all EU contributions for SMEs, with EUR 4.7 billion allocated so far to them (68%). Pillar II beneficiaries reported 24 (out of 124 programme-wide) intellectual property rights (IPR) applications. In addition to this, collaborative actions in Pillar II involve multiple organisations from different countries: more than would be possible at national or regional level. Moreover, EU Mission projects are more likely to engage citizens and stakeholders and to have co-design aspects (67% of Mission projects report this type of engagement, compared to 49% programme-wide).

The Commission shares the opinion that public-private governance structures should be streamlined and simplified to avoid unnecessary burdens and enhance focus on key priorities. Regarding European partnerships, the Commission has already significantly reduced their number from 120 in Horizon 2020 down to 60 in Horizon Europe. Evidence from the evaluation studies supporting the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe suggests that some areas covered by partnerships are now better coordinated. This has in turn led to an increase in public funding from EU Member States and a stronger collaboration at programme level. The Commission has strengthened the governance processes of EU Missions by reinforcing the horizontal steer and coordination. More specifically, the Commission engaged with Member States through the mutual learning exercise (MLE) of the Policy Support Facility. In addition, the Mission Boards' terms of reference (ToR) were updated in 2024 to improve coordination mechanisms and ensure strategic alignment with EU-wide and local objectives.

Paragraphs 40, 41 and 55, the Commission welcomes the recognition and support for the work of the European Innovation Council (EIC) and its efforts to attract private investments and to support the commercialisation

of -research-driven deep tech startups and SMEs. There is a clear structure and process in place to coordinate the grant and investment components for Accelerator beneficiaries, under the tasks delegated to the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) overseen by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD).

The Commission does not agree with the statement that its implementation decisions have led the EIC away from its intended purpose to help companies scale up – the identification and support for deep tech innovation and the scaling of companies throughout the lifecycle of ideas has been, and remains, the focus of the EIC. However, the Commission acknowledges the unintended consequences of the delays in establishing the EIC Fund and the move to indirect management at the beginning of the programme. The Commission has therefore closely monitored and benchmarked the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set by the EIC Board to focus on facilitating an optimal client journey, achieving market confidence and ensuring legal accountability. These indicators should be the key to inform future discussions on the institutional setting for the EIC.

Finally, the Commission takes note of the Parliament's invitation to further open the EIC's Transition calls and would like to draw attention to the effects of the limited budget for the EIC, which has been reduced following the end of the NextGenerationEU, combined with the effects of opening up of the scheme to ideas emerging from Pillar II of Horizon Europe and equivalent schemes under Horizon 2020. This has already significantly reduced EIC Transition success rates in the first such call in 2024 to around 10% compared to 15% in 2021-2023. Any further opening up risks further driving down success rates, thereby reducing the attractiveness of the scheme.

Paragraphs 49 and 51: the Commission takes note of the Parliament's concerns on the governance of EU Missions, a novelty in Horizon Europe. They were launched in 2021 with long-term objectives for 2030 and actions are geared towards this timeline. They support Europe's transformation into a greener, healthier, more inclusive and resilient continent, through a unique transformative policy approach, distinct from traditional frameworks, offering relevance, visibility, and tangible impact. Beyond technological advancements, R&I plays a crucial role in governance and societal transformation – key components of delivering on the Missions' ambitious objectives. The Commission underlines that the Horizon Europe interim evaluation constitutes the most recent evidence-based assessment of the Missions. According to its findings, the EU Missions are proceeding towards their goals, including the establishment of innovative structures and approaches that lay a strong foundation for their continued rollout and future impact, despite a cumbersome governance system and an incomplete monitoring framework for reporting on their progresses.

In terms of crowding in funding, all EU Missions have made progress in fostering synergies across various levels. At the EU level, calls and

activities in other programmes (European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, EU4Health, Digital Europe, Euratom, LIFE, CEF, and CAP) complement Horizon Europe and support the Missions' objectives. Collaboration with the European Investment Bank has further strengthened financial opportunities. Additionally, engagement with Member States, Associated Countries and regional initiatives has expanded funding avenues.

The Commission wishes to underline that, according to Horizon Europe interim evaluation, the following progress is observed so far. The EU Mission 'Restore our ocean and waters by 2030' is supporting 225 demonstration sites to prepare the ground for the uptake by national and regional actors of the proposed solutions. The Mission 'A Soil deal for Europe' set up the first 25 living labs out of the 100 it aims to establish to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030. 53 cities under the Mission '100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030' received the Mission label and had their 'climate city contracts' completed and assessed positively by the Commission. The Mission on adaptation to climate change is progressing towards its goal of 'supporting 150 European regions and communities becoming climate resilient by 2030' with 145 regions receiving support from the Mission. The EU Cancer Mission supports the revised Council Recommendation on cancer screening, a dialogue with young cancer survivors from all over Europe and international clinical trials, among other things.

The Commission also wishes to underline that the Communication "EU Missions two years on: assessment of progress and way forward" (COM(2023)457 final) confirmed that the Missions were on track to achieve their 2030 targets, demonstrating a clear potential to accelerate change. The assessment also identified a few remaining challenges to fully deliver on their potential. In response to these challenges, the Commission has been working on designing actions to be featured in the Missions' part of the Horizon Europe work programmes, on top of a number of other actions already planned by the Missions that are delivering or will deliver results in the coming months and years. First, these actions will enhance engagement by fostering the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders and ensuring that Missions are firmly anchored at the local level. Second, they will reinforce the coordination structure by improving monitoring, enhancing synergies between funding instruments and maintaining a coherent set of interventions to address the various dimensions of the Missions' objectives. Finally, they will expand the portfolio and sources of interventions by diversifying the instruments used, ensuring they reflect the transformative changes required to achieve the Missions' ambitious goals.

The Commission underlines that EU Missions are collective European endeavours. Their success relies on the shared commitment and active participation, including of the European Parliament, Member States and Associated Countries. While the Commission plays a key role in shaping

and coordinating the Missions, achieving their ambitious goals requires a strong and sustained commitment at all levels – leveraging national and regional policies, investments, and stakeholder engagement. The upcoming mission monitoring report, following up on the commitment in the Communication, will be yet another opportunity to take stock of the missions’ progress and take action accordingly to further steer the Missions towards their 2030 objectives.

Paragraph 52: the European Semester continues to play a crucial role in coordinating economic policy across the EU, identifying key socio-economic challenges, and guiding Member States towards effective policy solutions. Based on the strategic framework of the Competitiveness Compass, the Semester currently focuses on key competitiveness’ priorities such as research and innovation, access to finance, and simplification.

To enhance the Semester’s effectiveness, the Commission is strengthening the ownership through improved use of structured dialogues with Member States, social partners and other stakeholders, including local and regional authorities and relevant civil society organisations. To this end, the Commission conducts European Semester missions to the Member States, entailing discussions on the implementation of existing recommendations, including progress on R&D investments, when relevant, and on current or future policy action to address identified challenges and opportunities. These European Semester missions, combined with follow-up discussions ahead of the finalisation of the Country Reports, strengthen national ownership and enable more targeted recommendations.

Paragraph 54: As a part of Horizon Europe, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) have become the main instrument to support the career, skills development and mobility of researchers through doctoral and postdoctoral training, excellent doctoral networks as well as R&I staff exchanges with a focus on international, inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary cooperation. Looking ahead, the Commission will pilot a new co-funding mechanism in 2025 to boost Europe’s attractiveness for researchers under the MSCA *Choose Europe* initiative and in line with one of the recommendations from the Commission Expert Group on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe. This new co-funding initiative addresses the precarity and attractiveness of careers in research and offers more favourable and stable career prospects to attract and retain the most promising talents in Europe. The selected talent recruitment programmes submitted by the applicants will feed into longer-term research and academic strategies. This will benefit the recruited researchers, who will not only build networks and develop skills, but also advance towards concrete career prospects. Alongside this, by offering excellent working conditions and career opportunities to researchers, participating host institutions will increase their global attractiveness, visibility and reputation. This contributes also to the ambition of building a Union of Skills – one of the initiatives of the Commission’s mandate.

Paragraphs 4, 58, 68, 70 and 73: The interim evaluation of Horizon Europe addresses the better regulation criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness, and the EU value added of the Horizon Europe programme. It will support the design of future EU R&I measures in line with the 'evaluate first' principle of the better regulation guidelines.

The Commission acknowledges the shared commitment to putting research and innovation at the heart of our economy for the benefit of building a more competitive and resilient Europe. To deliver scientific, technological, economic, environmental and societal impact and to maximise the added value of the Union's R&I investments, the Union should invest in research and innovation through the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2028-2034. The programme should strengthen competitiveness, resilience, sustainability, technological leadership, and social cohesion. The programme should also contribute to increasing public and private investment in R&I in Member States, thereby helping to reach an overall investment target of at least 3% of the Union's gross domestic product in research and development. Member States' investment in R&I should be assessed with the help of the framework for the coordination of economic, budgetary, employment and social policies within the Union - the European Semester process. Achieving that target would require Member States and the private sector to complement the Programme with their own reinforced investment actions in research, development and innovation.

In a rapidly changing economic, social and geopolitical environment, recent experience has shown the need for a more flexible multiannual financial framework and its Union spending programmes. To that effect, and in line with the objectives of the Programme, the funding should duly consider the evolving policy needs and Union's priorities as identified in relevant documents published by the Commission, European Parliament resolutions and in Council conclusions, while ensuring sufficient predictability for the budget implementation.

Furthermore, the new European Competitiveness Fund will establish an investment capacity and help to leverage and de-risk private investments to support strategic technologies and manufacturing in identified strategic sectors such as clean-tech or chips, which are critical to European competitiveness, including research and innovation, and IPCEIs. It will accompany European projects in identified strategic sectors along the entire investment journey, from research, through scale-up, industrial deployment, to manufacturing, and it will flexibly mobilise all forms of Union funding: grants, loans, equity and procurement.

The Commission values the strong commitment of the European Parliament to shaping the long-term budget. To lead on innovation, the Commission is committed to creating the conditions for researchers to thrive. This means providing the infrastructure and laboratories they need to test and develop ideas through new public-private partnerships, such as

joint undertakings. For Small and Medium Enterprises to prosper, the Commission presented a Start-up-and Scale-Up Strategy on 28 May while the preparation of the European Innovation Act has started with the launch of a call for evidence and a public consultation on 9 July. To give a further boost to the European Research Area, the Commission will present a European Research Area Act. The current five EU Missions should have a time span until 2030. The Framework Programme should finance the research and innovation activities of these Missions, while the deployment and scaling up should be delivered through other EU programmes and national funding.

On research security, the Commission is working on implementation of the Council Recommendation on Enhancing Research Security. The Commission supports the implementation and uptake of the recommendations at national level, by the national authorities and the sector. The Commission contributes to it through the development and deployment of several EU-level initiatives on 1) creating a European cooperation space for research security; 2) reporting on progress through a Research Security Monitor; 3) organising, together with the sector, a biennial European flagship conference; and 4) establishing a European centre of expertise on Research Security. These elements represent a good basis for further developments in the future, in the context of broader international cooperation keeping the multilateral, regional and bilateral approach and being more strategically selective, where necessary, including by more systematically targeting the countries with which the EU has a strategic interest to work on certain technology development/research fields, based on a more in-depth analysis.