

**INSTITUT PASTEUR Position Paper / 10th FRAMEWORK
PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION**

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The Institut Pasteur has been an active and committed participant in the European Research and Innovation (R&I) Framework Programme. We are firmly dedicated to addressing Europe's most pressing challenges and enhancing its competitiveness and resilience. As Europe must look beyond the immediate future and develop strategies to maintain competitiveness in an evolving global landscape (characterized by a global competition with the US and China's rising scientific influence), the upcoming Tenth Framework programme (FP10) will remain a cornerstone in the next post-2027 EU Multiannual Programme (MPP). Like its predecessors, the programme's budget allocation, priorities and operational structure will significantly shape the EU's impact.

This paper outlines Institut Pasteur's position on the upcoming FP10, presenting ten key recommendations on key issues that should be addressed for its development.

1. ALLOCATE A BUDGET THAT MATCHES EUROPE'S AMBITION TO REMAIN (GLOBALLY) COMPETITIVE

FP10 requires **substantial investment** to address global social and R&I challenges, while ensuring Europe's competitiveness, sovereignty and strategic autonomy.

In alignment with the European Parliament's proposal, numerous university associations, research organizations, and research alliances, as well as the Draghi and Heitor Reports¹, advocate for a minimum budget of €200 billion for the future framework programme — more than double the current framework programme's budget. The Institut Pasteur endorses this recommendation as essential for Europe's global competitiveness in strategic areas.

We believe that increasing R&D funding in Europe is imperative for maintaining competitiveness. As noted in Mario Draghi's September 2024 report, *"The future of European competitiveness – A competitiveness strategy for Europe"*, *"the failure to meet the 3% target for R&D expenditure set by EU leaders over two decades ago is a fundamental reason why the EU lags behind the US and China"*.

Such funding would enable higher success rates for funded projects. According to the European Commission's 2024 evaluation report², two-thirds of high-quality proposals were not funded due to budget constraints. These low success rates can discourage applications to EU programmes, potentially driving innovative research towards national and international (particularly US) funding sources instead of the European R&D pipeline.

We advocate for increasing Pillar 1 budgets, notably for **European Research Council (ERC)** and **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)** programs, which have demonstrated significant impact. The annual ERC budget, as well as the amounts allocated per ERC

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en?filename=The%20future%20of%20European%20competitiveness%20-%20A%20competitiveness%20strategy%20for%20Europe.pdf

European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Align, act, accelerate – Research, technology and innovation to boost European competitiveness*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/9106236>

² <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/c683268c-3cdc-11ef-ab8f-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

project, should be increased to expand bottom-up approaches, particularly through ERC Synergy Grants. Additionally, funding for collaborative fundamental research addressing Europe's societal challenges in the current Pillar 2 must remain a priority.

In our fast-changing world, **flexibility** and **adaptability** are essential. The total budget should maintain flexibility through the creation of “reserves” to address emerging priorities and emergency situations during programme implementation. Unused reserves could be redistributed across the programme calls. Institut Pasteur supports the Heitor Report's recommendation to establish an experimental unit within DG RTD to test new reactive programmes and instruments with rapid funding deployment, helping maintain pace with the fast-evolving landscape of science and innovation.

2. CONSIDER HEALTH AS A TOP PRIORITY OF THE FP10

Health addresses numerous challenges facing Europeans: an ageing population, non-communicable diseases (cancers, metabolic, immune, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases), mental health, emerging infectious diseases and pandemics, antimicrobial resistance and environmental health, with many challenges increasing in the coming years due to climate change.

Health must remain a priority in future European research and innovation funding and should be recognized as a strategic sector. It represents both a major concern for European citizens and a significant global economic market. Indeed, Europe must take the lead in developing the biotechnologies of tomorrow and support innovative companies in their implementation. A sovereign pharmaceutical industry (covering clinical development, manufacturing, and distribution of vaccines, antibiotics, biomedicines, etc.) is key to addressing future health crises and ensuring fair healthcare access.

In this context, the Institut Pasteur's scientific vision aligns with Europe's current societal challenges:

- **Environmental transitions and health** (*emerging infections associated with climate and environmental changes, including vector-borne diseases*);
- **Infectious disease threats** (*including neglected infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance*);
- **Origins of diseases** (*etiology of inflammatory disorders and infection sequelae*);
- **Health & diseases at the extremes of life.**

Success in these areas requires sustained investment in research and innovation to maintain Europe's leadership and safeguard the quality of life for its citizens. This demands enhanced research collaboration and the development of talent across the European Union.

3. RETAIN AND OPTIMIZE THE FP STRUCTURE, THROUGH SIMPLIFICATION MEASURES

The next framework programme requires a structure that is easy to manage, offers opportunities for synergies, and is more accessible and understandable to applicants.

Based on Horizon Europe (HE) experience, **maintaining the three-pillar structure** for the next Framework Programme (FP) would be beneficial. The current three-pillar structure of Horizon Europe, as well as the cluster approach for collaborative research projects under Pillar 2, is clear and appropriate. Researchers need continuity and stability to familiarize themselves with the program's objectives, which in turn encourages participation. FP10 should maintain this continuity while implementing improvements in clarity, accessibility, administrative efficiency, and transparency.

Programme structure and funding instruments must be streamlined to avoid overlaps and simplify procedures. Funding rules require further simplification to expand access and reduce errors. Within the three pillars, funding mechanisms need restructuring, particularly in Pillar 3, where complexity has proven excessive. For instance, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) has been judged underperforming, which academic stakeholders find difficult to navigate.

The Heitor report's ninth recommendation emphasizes addressing administrative complexity. A Horizon 2020 (H2020) evaluation study revealed that "a median coordinator in EIC (Pathfinder and Transition) and EIE application takes 36 to 45 person-days to prepare an application" while median value for contributing partners is between 16 to 25 person-days in addition to the coordinators," highlighting the heavy time and administrative burden these applications represent for researchers.

Regarding funding mechanisms, the expanded use of lump-sum funding for certain types of grants, including European Research Council (ERC), represents a real improvement for both beneficiaries and the European Commission. However, for collaborative European projects, lump-sum financing has created an unexpected burden on scientists and administrative teams during the budget preparation phase. While financial reporting requirements have been eliminated, organizations must still maintain rigorous financial oversight of their expenses. Consequently, lump-sum funding has primarily simplified administration for the Commission rather than for participants. FP10 must **prioritize implementing a clear, straightforward lump-sum system** that fosters transparency and assesses tangible advantages for all stakeholders.

Additionally, we strongly recommend discontinuing the **blind evaluation pilot program**. This approach has proven inadequate for evaluating and ensuring proposal excellence and should not continue in FP10. The blind evaluation system prevents project authors from effectively demonstrating their capacity to execute the project, as they cannot include identifying details in project descriptions. Moreover, no evidence suggests that this method successfully mitigates either actual or perceived reputational bias in the evaluation process:

4. MAINTAIN FUNDING FOR COLLABORATIVE FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH

As highlighted in the Draghi Report, research and innovation (R&I) are the main drivers of productivity and well-being. Europe's widening innovation gap with the US has contributed to slower productivity growth, underscoring the crucial importance of R&I investment.

Collaborative fundamental research funding provides the essential foundation for innovation — there can be no innovation without underlying research. Therefore, the next R&I programme must continue to support fundamental collaborative research.

Current funding for basic research outside the European Research Council (ERC) is insufficient in Horizon Europe. Since its 2007 establishment, ERC has become one of the world's most prestigious and successful scientific funding instruments. Under Horizon Europe, fundamental research funding primarily occurs through Pillars 1 and 2 under. While Pillar 1 largely restricts funding to single-beneficiary projects, Pillar 2 increasingly targets high-TRLs projects.

To address these limitations, ERC calls should remain primarily mono-beneficiary, while ERC Synergy calls require significantly increased budgets. Additionally, thematic cluster calls covering the entire innovation chain need strengthening to enhance their impact. Addressing Europe's major health challenges requires a balanced combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches. Within Pillar 2, establishing open collaborative calls focused on low-TRL research is essential for supporting competitive projects. These calls should remain breadth and flexibility, targeting major EU health challenges while enabling innovative solutions across a wide thematic spectrum. Calls addressing specific health priorities should be shaped through strategic programming within the future framework program FP10.

Moreover, FP10 must protect conditions for independent research and unrestricted use of research knowledge. This approach best promotes scientific research, knowledge creation, new technologies and innovation for the benefit of Europe as a whole.

5. STRENGTHEN TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

While investing in high-TRL, high-impact projects remain important, we must equally emphasize frontier research with lower TRLs to build an effective pipeline for translating fundamental research. As Louis Pasteur said: "There is no such thing as a special category of science called applied science; there is science and its applications, which are related to one another as the fruit is related to the tree that has borne it". Therefore, balanced support for lower-TRL projects is essential for ensuring future high-impact outcomes.

ERC Proof-of-Concept and EIC Transition funding provide excellent opportunities to maximize research impact. However, restrictive eligibility conditions limit access to these instruments, and the EIC's 8% low success rates, coupled with a 72% oversubscription rate, is problematic. These statistics demonstrate the need to significantly increase the EIC

budget, which decreased from €1.6B to €1.2B in 2024. The Draghi report recommends increasing funding to achieve a minimum of 15% success rate.

Analysis of ERC and EIC open calls reveals an important insight: these bottom-up programs fund proposals aligned with the European Commission's strategic priorities. Open calls often provide faster funding than top-down calls, highlighting their importance in ensuring rapid innovation in response to emerging needs. This suggests that reallocating some EIC funds from challenge-driven to open calls could maximize European research impact.

Regarding academic-industrial partnerships, initiatives like the Innovative Health Initiative (IHI) must proceed transparently, as building consortia with industry remains challenging, especially for one-stage, topic-driven calls. Bridging gaps between preclinical and clinical development and commercialization is essential for public and global health innovations, including new therapeutics, vaccines, and diagnostics.

Finally, **streamlining processes in FP10 will be crucial for maximizing European R&I capacity**. Enhanced transparency and reduced complexity in EIT support programs (funding, venture-building, networking, training) will be crucial for positioning Europe at innovation's forefront.

6. STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

The Horizon Europe programme stands out for its commitment to international cooperation, providing significant opportunities for European actors seeking to expand global networks. This openness, combined with lessons learned from past experiences like the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores the critical importance of global scientific collaboration, effective communication, and robust relationships with international counterparts. Key global challenges — including pandemic preparedness, climate change, and the “One Health” concept (encompassing human, animal, and planetary health) — require developing multidisciplinary R&I networks of international experts, including from Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC), to safeguard our future. International cooperation also serves as a strategic tool for enhancing the EU's global scientific position.

Institut Pasteur advocates strengthening sustainable scientific collaboration with LMIC partners, particularly in development research. As an active member of the European Research Alliance for Sustainable Development (ERASuD), the Institut Pasteur supports enhanced Global South cooperation in FP10. R&I priorities should integrate into strategic dialogues, with increased synergy and alignment with **HERA** and the **FPI**, notably the **NDICI-Global Europe**.

To achieve these collaboration goals, dedicated financial resources are essential—both for building research capacity and for developing and implementing projects that address shared public health priorities with LMIC. Additionally, we must prioritize more efficient exchanges of knowledge, resources, experts, and students. **The Global Health European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (GH EDCTP)** plays a crucial role in this context and should be maintained. This vital partnership enables the mobilization of

substantial funding to support European research teams collaborating with Sub-Saharan African counterparts to address critical global health challenges.

Horizon Europe's international cooperation opportunities — through targeted project calls and ambitious partnerships with strategic countries such as Brazil and other LMIC — represent key components of the EU's international cooperation strategy.

Institut Pasteur, as a beneficiary body, emphasizes the value of the Hop on Facility within Horizon Europe. This initiative fosters inclusive, flexible, and impactful open collaboration, helps integrating additional partners who may bring complementary skills or knowledge, leading to more innovative solutions and the sharing of best practices across sectors.

We strongly advocate for expanding this cooperation policy under FP10. Such expansion would enable more effective resource pooling, reduce redundancy in research efforts, and maximize the impact of European research initiatives globally.

7. STRENGTHENING AND EXPANDING EXISTING RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

Research infrastructures are the cornerstone of high-impact research, development and innovation. **Well-designed and coherent research infrastructure initiatives** enhance the quality, advancement, and competitiveness of European research while increasing the international attractiveness of European research environments.

Under H2020, several research communities — both emerging and advanced — received funding to build sustainable European infrastructures. While Horizon Europe infrastructure calls have supported initiatives to integrate existing infrastructures, these large projects have introduced significant administrative complexities for participants.

To maximize investment impact and minimize additional legal and administrative burdens, FP10 should prioritize enhancing established infrastructures. This approach leverages existing expertise and resources while ensuring resilience. However, FP10 should also support smaller consortia and emerging initiatives that can benefit from existing infrastructures networks.

8. CLARIFY AND STRENGTHEN HERA'S MANDATE, TOOLS, AND RESOURCES IN FP10

To improve the effectiveness of Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) funded projects in identifying emerging threats, **stronger connections between different agencies** must be established, with relevant communication channels made public. Strategic information sharing can improve crisis response resilience. Subsequently, projects should respond with evidence-based research programs to inform HERA of potential associated risks.

Increasing eligible funding for Global South countries, where many threats of (re)emergence occur, would strengthen scientific collaboration and reinforce global preparedness efforts. An independent funding source for HERA should also be considered, complementing existing support from Horizon Europe, EU4Health, and rescEU³.

The current variety of funding mechanisms complicates researchers' understanding of and contribution to HERA's mandate. A unified, harmonized funding system would improve efficiency, flexibility, transparency, and accessibility across the funding landscape.

Establishing a high-level expert group collaborating with the European Commission would help prevent redundancies between existing programs such as Horizon Europe and EU4Health. This group would coordinate efforts to ensure coherence and complementarity among various European health research funding programs.

9. ADVANCE THROUGH EFFECTIVE CO-CONSTRUCTION PROCESS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

The current Framework Programme's governance structure requires redesigning to become more agile and outcome-oriented, moving forward excessive bureaucracy and slow processes.

While Horizon Europe's planning system has demonstrated flexibility in responding to global challenges, including the COVID-19 crisis, its focus on short-term solutions has sometimes compromised more visionary, long-term research initiatives crucial for Europe's sustainable competitiveness.

The Framework Programme's strategic planning process remains valuable, enabling better anticipation of calls and development of strategic positioning over time.

Although the Institut Pasteur, as a non-State actor, does not directly participate in the strategic planning process, we underscore the importance of EU Partnerships, (such as those in pandemic preparedness). These partnerships effectively represent an effective model for designing and implementing R&I activities at the European level by involving stakeholders in defining research priorities and structuring research communities. Their role should expand in FP10, provided their scope remains clearly defined, and all stakeholders maintain strong commitment to ensuring effectiveness.

The next Framework Programme (FP10) should build on these positive experiences by maintaining strategic planning and biennial programming of calls for proposals. However, the strategic planning process requires greater transparency, with a stronger focus on the scheduling of proposals, and better alignment between strategic exercises and project design. We recommend increased self-governance, with fewer prescriptive calls and the establishment of expert councils that place Europe's scientists, researchers, and innovators at the forefront of programming decisions, enabling them to shape the agenda and select the most promising projects.

³ https://health.ec.europa.eu/health-emergency-preparedness-and-response-hera/funding-and-opportunities_en

Regarding the co-construction of work programmes, the European Commission should set more reasonable deadlines for Member States and operators to provide comments and proposals on complex documents that are often cumbersome to analyze.

10. ENHANCE SYNERGIES WITH OTHER EU PROGRAMMES

Synergies between European programmes with national and regional initiatives represent a unique feature and a critical added value of the EU's action. An efficient design, creation and implementation of the EU's, Member States' and Associated Countries' policies, promoting the right policy mix for the science and technology advancement, is the way to put synergies in practice.

However, while these synergies are well-recognized and necessary for enhancing EU funding impact in R&I and contributing to efficient public fund governance, coordination between different instruments remains operationally complex.

Continued focus on agenda simplification, rule streamlining, and process coherence across European, national, and regional levels is crucial. This challenge becomes more significant when considering the creation and deployment of a large-scale European Competitiveness Fund encompassing multiple EU programmes including R&I instruments.

In this context, preserving the autonomy of a dedicated Research programme remains essential, ensuring its operation continues to benefit from previous framework programmes' accumulated experience. All EU public R&D spending should be better coordinated at the EU level, with a reformed and strengthened Framework Programme playing a crucial role.

This approach will safeguard research funding effectiveness while maintaining Europe's position at the forefront of scientific and technological innovation and excellence. Only by prioritizing R&I can we expect to enhance competitiveness—R&I represents a long-term foundation for competitiveness rather than a short-term solution.