Investing in what makes Europe strong

Joint statement on research and innovation in the EU's next seven-year budget

9 September 2026

As the European Union enters a decisive phase of the preparations for its next long-term budget for 2028-2034, it faces important choices about where to invest for the future. The decisions taken in the coming months will shape Europe's capacity to generate breakthrough discoveries, drive social progress, strengthen innovation and build the foundations of its future long-term prosperity, resilience and competitiveness. In this context, research and innovation are a critical strategic investment.

Horizon Europe is the European Union's flagship instrument for making this investment. By supporting frontier research, collaborative research, research careers and mobility, as well as research infrastructures, it enables activities that no member state can deliver alone. It strengthens Europe's scientific foundations and creates European added value by connecting knowledge, talent and innovation across borders.

The choices made now will shape Europe's capacity to compete, innovate and act for decades to come. Research and innovation are not costs to be contained, but investments in the knowledge, talent and technologies on which Europe's future strength depends. We therefore call on policy makers to translate Europe's ambitions into the resources needed to compete globally.

As the EU budget negotiations progress, Member States and the European Parliament must:

1. Match Europe's ambitions with at least €200 billion for Horizon Europe

Europe's ambitions require investment at the necessary scale. To deliver the scientific excellence, breakthrough discoveries, innovation and long-term impact Europe expects from Horizon Europe, the programme needs a commensurate budget.

We recognise that there are significant budgetary constraints in an increasingly challenging geopolitical and economic environment. These constraints make clear prioritisation all the more important. As such, investment in research and innovation must be prioritised to deliver on Europe's priorities. R&I strengthens progress across policy areas and helps limited public resources achieve greater impact by providing knowledge, talent and technologies on which Europe's competitiveness, security, resilience and prosperity depend.

The European Commission has proposed a budget of €175 billion for Horizon Europe, which is already below the level needed to meet Europe's ambitions. While €175 billion seems substantially larger than the budget of the current programme, inflation and rising research costs significantly reduce the increase in real terms. The budget should therefore be increased during the negotiations to at least €200 billion, as proposed by the European Parliament, to give Horizon Europe the resources needed to deliver at the necessary scale.

2. Guarantee budget certainty for Horizon Europe

Excellent research depends on stable and predictable investment. Research-performing organisations, such as universities and research institutes, as well as innovative businesses, plan investments, recruit talent and build international collaborations over many years. For this reason, a stable and protected Horizon Europe budget is needed to enable ambitious, high-risk research, strengthen Europe's research capacity and provide the continuity needed to ensure long-term competitiveness and prosperity.

The financial envelope of Horizon Europe should therefore constitute a minimum commitment, rather than an indicative allocation, providing certainty throughout the programme. This requires a stable annual funding profile, with at least 12% of the total programme budget committed each year. Emerging priorities should be supported by additional resources, preserving the funding committed to R&I and its long-term objectives.

Financial contributions from associated countries should also be distributed transparently across the programme's instruments, in line with their level of participation in each instrument.

3. Ensure a balanced investment across the research and innovation continuum

The impact of the next Horizon Europe programme will depend not only on its overall budget, but also on how resources are distributed within the programme. Its internal allocation should maintain a balanced investment across the R&I continuum, with strong support for excellent frontier research, research talent, early-stage collaborative research and breakthrough innovation.

Particular attention should be given to safeguarding activities at lower and medium technology readiness levels. These are the stages where high-risk, high-reward ideas are developed and where public funding has a particularly important role, as private investment is less likely to step in. Strong investment at these stages builds the knowledge and technologies that underpin future breakthroughs and feed the later stages of innovation.

An effective European R&I system requires support across all stages, with different EU instruments playing to their respective strengths. Horizon Europe should provide strong support for excellent research, knowledge creation, research infrastructures, research talent and the earlier stages of the research and innovation continuum, while deployment, market uptake, scale-up and cost of infrastructure construction should be supported through other EU instruments, notably the European Competitiveness Fund.

4. Agree an ambitious EU budget in time for Horizon Europe to start in January 2028

A strong Horizon Europe requires timely agreement on the programme's legal acts and the Multiannual Financial Framework. Member States and the European Parliament should conclude negotiations on both in time to ensure the timely adoption of the next Horizon Europe programme and its work programmes, allowing the first funding calls to be launched from 1 January 2028. Delays would create uncertainty for applicants, interrupt European collaboration and slow the implementation of Europe's R&I priorities.

The agreement should be supported by an ambitious and sufficiently large overall EU budget, capable of financing the Union's priorities without creating competition between Horizon

Europe and other programmes. In this context, we welcome the exploration of additional revenue sources, including new EU “own resources”, to strengthen the overall EU budget. The possible future availability of such resources must not be anticipated as a substitute for, nor used to justify reductions in, the ambitious and predictable Horizon Europe budget that must be secured from the outset as part of the MFF.

5. Invest in research and innovation at both European and national levels

National investment is the foundation of European R&I. Horizon Europe builds on this foundation by supporting activities that are most effectively delivered through European cooperation, connecting researchers, institutions, companies and innovation ecosystems across borders.

Europe’s long-term competitiveness, prosperity and security therefore depend on strong and complementary investment at both levels. As EU institutions negotiate the next EU budget, an ambitious Horizon Europe budget must be accompanied by swift progress towards investment of at least 3% of gross domestic product (GDP) in the sector, including the target of 1.25% of EU GDP public effort, to be achieved by each Member State by 2030. This combined effort is essential to strengthen the European Research Area. Member States should complement this investment with effective measures needed to strengthen the capacity and performance of their national R&I systems.

Signatories

- CESAER - https://www.cesaer.org/
- Coimbra Group - https://www.coimbra-group.eu/
- EUA - https://www.eua.eu/
- EU-LIFE - https://eu-life.eu/
- The Guild - https://www.the-guild.eu/
- LERU - https://www.leru.org/
- YERUN - https://yerun.eu/