

EUA welcomes the European Parliament's recommendations on FP10 and flags areas for further consideration

December 2024

In November 2024, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament (ITRE) [published](#) a draft report on the assessment of the implementation of Horizon Europe in view of its interim evaluation and recommendations for the tenth Research Framework Programme (FP10). The European University Association (EUA) welcomes this document, which aligns closely with many recommendations from the Association's own [vision for FP10](#).

The Association especially welcomes the key recommendation of the report to preserve FP10 as a stand-alone EU programme and ensure that it becomes more user-oriented, science-led, effective, and efficiently implemented.

However, the Association also identifies several recommendations within the draft report that require further attention:

ITRE's support to the creation of two Councils in Pillar 2

The draft report supports the idea proposed by the Commission's Expert Group on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe (commonly referred to as the Heitor report) to split the current Pillar 2 into two Councils – an Industrial Competitiveness and Technology Council and a Societal Challenges Council. While EUA supports the idea of establishing an independent body of R&I community representatives to guide the direction of Pillar 2 and reduce its dominance by policy objectives, it does not support splitting the pillar into two separate councils.

As outlined in [EUA's response](#) to the Heitor report, industrial competitiveness and societal challenges cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. These two spheres are deeply intertwined, requiring collaboration between a variety of partners from different sectors, including universities, industry and civil society organisations. There is a risk that dividing the current Pillar 2 into two separate councils could create silos. This would weaken the programme's collaborative spirit, which is essential for addressing complex challenges that span both spheres. Any new governance structure of the programme must encourage, rather than hinder, cross-sector collaboration. Another concerning aspect of this proposed split is that the Societal Challenges Council may be sidelined, as the Heitor report suggests that the Industrial Competitiveness and Technology Council will take the lead on societal challenges that have significant potential for industrial involvement. This could undermine the primary role of the Societal Challenges Council in addressing these important issues.

For these reasons, and to ensure that Pillar 2 retains its collaborative and holistic approach, EUA recommends reconsidering this proposal.

ITRE's recommendation to allocate 50% of the programme budget to the ERC and EIC

EUA takes note of the ITRE Committee's proposal to place the European Research Council (ERC) and the European Innovation Council (EIC) at the core of FP10 by allocating 50% of the programme's budget to these two essential instruments. It is however crucial that the proposal carefully considers its implications for the programme's other instruments, ensuring a balanced and inclusive approach.

It is especially important to recognise the important role of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and the necessity of increasing the budget for this programme to unlock its full potential. MSCA is crucial for enabling future researchers to build strong international, intersectoral, and interdisciplinary networks, while offering unparalleled opportunities for professional development and cross-border cooperation. By promoting the exchange of ideas and best practices, MSCA contributes significantly to Europe's global competitiveness, which should be acknowledged in the report and the budget considerations.

In the context of the EIC, EUA stresses the importance of strengthening the EIC Pathfinder and EIC Transition. These instruments play a critical role in bridging the gap between research excellence and the transformation of findings into innovative solutions – one of the key challenges facing the European R&I ecosystem.

While further strengthening the ERC, MSCA, and EIC is essential in FP10, proper attention must also be given to collaborative research opportunities currently housed within Pillar 2, particularly those at lower technology readiness levels (TRLs). Collaboration stands out as a fundamental strength of the programme, fostering cross-border, inter-sectoral partnerships and knowledge exchange, and thereby significantly increasing the programme's impact. The draft report should also reflect on the place of this pillar in the future of the programme.

ITRE's recommendation to develop European Universities alliances into 'European scientific institutes'

The draft report proposes developing the alliances established under the European Universities initiatives into 'European scientific institutes'. However, it provides little detail on what such institutes would entail. It is important to recognise that these alliances originated with a focus on education, with many now expanding to incorporate a research dimension. The synergy between these dimensions is vital, as it underpins the unique strength of universities.

EUA emphasises, as outlined in its [position](#) on the future of transnational university cooperation, that it is crucial to ensure the academic purpose and vision remain central to alliances and their cooperation models. Alliances are not tools for implementing external policy objectives – they are the result of collaboration among autonomous academic institutions. Building such deep, transnational partnerships takes time and sustained effort. Overburdening alliances with policy-driven goals risks undermining their potential, a concern that should be carefully considered in this specific proposal of the draft report.

EUA hopes that these suggestions will help the European Parliament in further advancing the draft report and remains committed to ongoing dialogue with its members to develop a robust and impactful FP10.