

EERA Position Paper on Framework Programme 10: Guiding Principles and Perspectives

About EERA

The [European Energy Research Alliance \(EERA\)](#) is a membership-based, non-profit association, constituting the largest low-carbon energy research community in Europe and the formal research pillar of the SET Plan. It was established in 2008 by leading research institutes to expand and optimise EU energy research capabilities. Today, it brings together more than 250 organisations from 30 countries. EERA coordinates its activities through 18 pan-European Joint Programmes that provide world-leading scientific expertise on three pillars: materials, low-carbon technologies, and systems' dimensions.

Context

EERA, as the voice of clean energy research in Europe, is eager to contribute to the upcoming proposal for the next Framework Programme FP10. Its community of researchers actively participates in the activities of the Framework Programmes and possesses extensive expertise about their functioning and impact. Through this position paper, formulated in the form of key recommendations, EERA aims to express its views and insights on how to construct an attractive, robust, competitive, and balanced research environment to propel the EU to the forefront of global innovation.

1 - Making FP10 a key driver to deliver on the Clean Energy Transition

- Shape FP10 in a manner that boldly and assertively reflects the political imperative of placing Research and Innovation (R&I) at the core of a successful implementation of the European Green Deal and the related Clean Energy Transition to achieve the 2030, 2040, and 2050 energy and climate goals.
- Adopt a systemic approach in the energy and climate-related calls, which takes into consideration the whole clean energy value chain and its integration in the energy system at large.
- Make FP10 the primary tool for establishing connections between research and policy to ensure that project findings become integral to evidence-based policymaking.

2 - Ensuring stable and ambitious funding & creating funding synergies

- Allocate an ambitious budget to FP10 to ensure that future challenges will be adequately addressed, and that European competitiveness is strengthened while pursuing a net-zero trajectory. In this regard, EERA is joining the widespread call from several voices across the EU's R&I community to more than double Horizon Europe's budget of €95.5 billion by allocating €200 billion to FP10 to guarantee acceptable success rates of proposals.
- Streamline and establish synergies between FP10 and other funding instruments at EU, national, regional, and private levels to avoid duplication and maximise impact, for example through joint calls between programmes.



- Facilitate funding of outstanding yet unsuccessful proposals through other instruments, for instance, using tools such as the Sovereignty Portal¹ and the Seal of Excellence².
- Ensure stability and long-term planning as core principles in FP design, by securing its budget for its entire lifespan and allowing for sufficient resilience to respond to newly arising and urgent R&I challenges whilst ensuring that its budget is not diverted to fund other priorities.
- Ensure that the 2015 Mission Innovation pledge³, promising a doubling of energy research investments, is fulfilled through ambitious strategies and binding targets.

3 – Maintaining a balanced approach across the research spectrum

- Ensure that framework programming and all connected instruments adhere to the principle of encompassing the whole R&I value chain—meaning from the earliest stages of frontier research to the latest stages of close-to-market development. This would ensure well-adjusted funding across the research continuum and avoid imbalances in the knowledge value chain in a context where there is increasing political focus on high-TRLs to the detriment of basic research, which is essential to competitiveness, and to promote the emergence of new ideas and concepts.
- Further utilise and disseminate outcomes of relevant high-TRL projects to facilitate the deployment of new technologies by reinforcing and significantly scaling up collaboration with industry stakeholders.

4 – Promoting interdisciplinary approaches & stakeholder engagement

- Promote interdisciplinary approaches that combine industrial and technological elements with their societal implications.
- Better integrate social sciences and humanities (SSH) approaches and expertise in both the conception and evaluation processes.
- Incorporate active involvement of stakeholders in co-creating, co-designing, and/or executing projects, particularly end-users, to enhance the credibility, relevance, and legitimacy of the research results.

5 – Reinforcing the role and ambition of the European Partnerships

- Boost European Partnerships, ensuring their work is well aligned with relevant EU policies. These instruments have proven key to developing collaborative work and overcoming the "valley of death" in innovation.
- Implement a portfolio approach⁴ to the different European Partnerships to reduce duplication and fragmentation, foster cooperation, and achieve clearly defined common objectives in a more targeted

¹ The Sovereignty Portal is an online One-Stop-Shop aimed at support projects' promoters and Member States in their [STEP](#) investments supported by the different EU funds: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3345

² The Seal of Excellence is a quality label first introduced during Horizon 2020, which is currently awarded to project proposals submitted under Horizon Europe calls and ranked above predefined quality thresholds but not funded due to budgetary constraints: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/seal-excellence_en

³ <https://mission-innovation.net/>

⁴ The portfolio approach is a tool to navigate the innovation efforts towards a clearly defined strategy or mission: <https://www.efiscentre.eu/innovation-portfolio-approach-public-sector/>

and rapid manner. Member states and their funding agencies, notably through the Clean Energy Transition Partnership (CETP)⁵, should also leverage the potential of this approach.

- Maintain, as is the case now with Horizon Europe, a limit to the research budget for the European Partnerships to ensure that research budgets cover a broader set of topics than those taken up by the partnerships, which are typically more industry led.

6 – Enhancing EU Missions for increased impact

- Safeguard the "mission approach", which fosters new forms of collaboration, brings R&I closer to citizens, and is adapted to the non-linear research process, owing to its long-term planning and intermediary benchmarks.
- Enhance the implementation of the EU Missions through meticulous and coordinated strategic planning processes, along with strengthened monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
- Implement mission-oriented policies through a strategic portfolio approach rather than as a separate programme.
- Ensure that the "mission approach" is research-oriented and that deployment projects are funded through other programmes than FP10.

7 – Closing the widening gap through a tailored approach

- Continue to consider widening as a horizontal FP10 sub-programme with a specific budget and specific calls, labelled as "widening" within all Pillars.
- Base the above-mentioned sub-programme on a comprehensive evaluation of widening measures implemented in the current and past Framework Programmes to assess their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- Building on the widening gap's learning curve, consider additional funds for FP10 from the enlargement and DG NEAR budgets for greater integration of candidate countries into the European Research Area.

8 – Facilitating international cooperation while preserving EU's strategic autonomy

- Enable association to FP10 with long-standing, like-minded international partners beyond the European continent by removing barriers to association. In parallel, continue promoting other existing programmes dedicated to international mobility of students and researchers by simplifying their implementation, through smaller and more targeted projects as it is currently the case.
- Ensure that association pathways do not contradict the EU's objectives of strategic autonomy, are aligned with the European Commission's Communication on the Global Approach to Research and Innovation, and safeguard knowledge security.

⁵ <https://cetpartnership.eu/>



9 – Advancing equality, inclusion, and research excellence

- Embed in FP10 the promotion of the principles of equality of opportunity and access, inclusion, diversity, and fairness across all its actions.
- Align the forthcoming FP10 with efforts to enhance the attractiveness of research careers.
- Safeguard freedom of scientific research and ensure open access to research data in line with the FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable) principles⁶.
- Better involve highly qualified scientists in decision-making related to research funding.

10 – Keeping on improving administrative procedures

- Continue to simplify the overly complex grant proposal process, from submission and reporting to audit and evaluation.
- Provide applicants with the full evaluation summary report of the winning proposal for the process to be more transparent and fairer, and to ensure learning on every side.
- Distribute calls and Grant Agreement Preparation (GAP) deadlines throughout the year. Currently, deadlines are concentrated at the beginning of the year and after the summer, creating additional administrative hurdles.
- Reinforce and systematically adopt in all areas the clustering of projects related to the same objective, even if not necessarily funded under the same topic. This would ensure that relevant results are discussed and disseminated among peers, and that common actions (e.g. contributions to standards) are streamlined.

⁶ <https://www.ugent.be/en/research/openscience/datamanagement/after-research/fair-data.htm>