



POSITION Science Europe Supports New Instrument for Collaborative Bottom-up Research in Horizon Europe 2028–2034

24 June 2026

The value of bottom-up, curiosity-driven research cannot be overstated: long-term strategic competitiveness and breakthrough innovation are built upon the outcomes of fundamental, open-ended research.

Science Europe has consistently advocated to enable collaboration in bottom-up, fundamental research and innovation (R&I).¹ It therefore welcomes the support for this in the upcoming Framework Programme and takes note of the wide range of proposals to establish an instrument to this end, as well as of the successful national-level initiatives they follow.

While existing Horizon Europe instruments provide support for such research, this often takes the shape of single-beneficiary grants or only provides an opportunity for collaboration between a limited number of partners. The report '[The future of European competitiveness](#)' by Mario Draghi clearly indicates that research excellence is a major strength of the EU; however, collaboration in bottom-up, early-stage, researcher-driven research remains underexploited.

The development of Horizon Europe 2028–2034 provides an opportunity to **create a new programme component under the Horizon Europe regulation, dedicated to bottom-up collaborative R&I, separate from and complementary to the currently existing instruments.** Such an instrument could generate significant European added value, as it could:

- Foster researcher-driven, collaborative bottom-up approaches that bridge different

disciplines in an open-ended manner. This can contribute significantly to scientific breakthroughs and reinforce European R&I leadership. Such collaboration can also strengthen the European Research Area by fostering durable research networks, knowledge exchange and scientific integration across countries and disciplines.

- Further develop scientific capacity, building on the robust foundation of pre-existing excellent frontier research in the EU and its wide range of high-quality institutions. Through strengthening scientific excellence, the programme will also contribute to talent attraction and balanced brain circulation. It could also create new opportunities to engage excellent researchers and institutions across the wider European research ecosystem, including from Associated Countries, thereby strengthening scientific excellence and co-operation.



An in-depth analysis of possible options would be necessary to develop the best approach to pilot such an instrument, while allowing room for adjustment and learning. Science Europe stands ready to contribute to such an analysis and emphasises that the momentum towards a new instrument should also serve as an opportunity to foster dialogue on bottom-up R&I collaboration.



1. Notably in its [amendment recommendations for the FP10 legislative proposals](#) (page 19), its [early reactions to the release of these initial proposals](#), as well as its events and workshops prior to the publication of the MFF, such as at its [FP10 workshop in February 2025](#), or its [2024 High Level Workshop on ERA in Budapest](#), among others.

Science Europe is the association of national research funding and research performing organisations in Europe. We define long-term perspectives for European research and champion best-practice approaches that enable high-quality research for knowledge advancement and the needs of society.

Our vision for the next Horizon Europe is a Framework Programme that supports a robust research & innovation ecosystem providing the best conditions for excellent science and researchers.

More information is available at www.scienceeurope.org

 [@scienceeurope.org](https://twitter.com/scienceeurope)
 [@ScienceEurope](https://x.com/ScienceEurope)

 Science Europe
 [@science-europe](https://www.youtube.com/science-europe)