



EU-LIFE ANNUAL REPORT 2025

A growing and thriving community





EU-LIFE is the alliance of independent research institutes in the life sciences across Europe

May 2026

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
2025 IN NUMBERS	3
2025 MAIN PUBLICATIONS AND EVENTS AT A GLANCE	4
EU-LIFE INSTITUTES	5
EU-LIFE ORGANISATION	6
COMMUNITY MEETING 2025	7
EU-LIFE SCIENCE VISION TALK CONTEST 2025	8
STRATEGY MEETING 2025	9
EUROPEAN SCIENCE POLICY	10
The Future of European Research & Innovation	11
Frontier Research as a Driver for European Competitiveness	12
Strengthening the European Research Area (ERA)	13
Advancing Europe's Leadership in the Life Sciences	14
Research Security and Responsible Internationalisation	15
Reforming Research Assessment	16
Supporting Research Careers across Europe	17
RESEARCH CULTURE AND GOVERNANCE	18
Strengthening Research Management and Institutional Capacity	19
Supporting Researchers and Career Development	20
Promoting Innovation and Knowledge Transfer	21
Advancing Sustainable Research Practices	22
Using Data to Learn, Compare and Improve	23
Engaging Local Communities and Stakeholders	24

FOREWORD

2025 was an intense year for EU-LIFE — a year marked by growth, engagement and a renewed sense of collective purpose. As an alliance of independent life science research institutes, EU-LIFE exists to amplify the voice of excellent research in Europe. This mission has never felt more relevant than in a year where science, policy and society converged with particular intensity.

We were especially proud to **welcome two outstanding institutes into the EU-LIFE community: The Francis Crick Institute and the Ruđer Bošković Institute.** Their inclusion strengthens our collective ambition, geographical reach and intellectual diversity. Both institutions bring distinctive perspectives and deep expertise, reinforcing EU-LIFE as a truly pan European alliance committed to research excellence, openness and collaboration.

Throughout 2025, EU-LIFE significantly deepened its **engagement in European science policy.** As discussions on the future of European research funding intensified — particularly around the next Framework Programme (FP10) and the Multiannual Financial Framework — EU-LIFE stepped up its contributions with clarity and resolve. Through policy statements, joint with other leading stakeholder organisations, high level meetings and active participation in the European Research Area, we worked to ensure that excellent, discovery-driven research remains at the heart of Europe's competitiveness, resilience and long term prosperity — and that independent research institutes have a clear voice in policy in Europe. This policy work was not only extensive in scope but deeply

rooted in the collective intelligence and experience of our member institutes and the team at the EU-LIFE office.

Equally important was the extraordinary mobilisation of the **EU-LIFE community.** Across working groups, task forces and events, professionals from our institutes contributed time, expertise and creativity to advance topics ranging from research assessment and careers to sustainability, research management and innovation. The alliance's strength continues to lie in this shared commitment — a living network where policy, practice and community reinforce one another.

True to our piloting DNA, 2025 was also a year of **experimentation and bold new formats.** Nowhere was this more visible than in the launch of the first EU-LIFE Science Vision Talk Contest — an inspiring, creative and joyful celebration of science communication. Sometimes described as an “Eurovision of science”, the contest showcased the talent, courage and imagination of researchers across Europe, reminding us that scientific excellence and creativity go hand in hand.

As we look ahead, this report captures momentum for EU-LIFE: a growing alliance, an engaged community and a strong, credible voice in European science policy. We remain deeply grateful to everyone who contributes to making EU-LIFE what it is — and excited about what we can continue to build together.

Giulio Superti-Furga

Chair of EU-LIFE & Director of CeMM

Marta Agostinho

EU-LIFE Executive Director



Giulio Superti-Furga and Marta Agostinho, FMI, Basel.

2025 IN NUMBERS



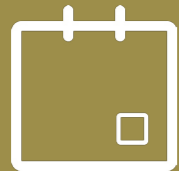
7

policy papers
& statements



11

contributions to EC
policy processes



28

events as speakers
or organisers



6

reports &
factsheets



56

working group
meetings



3,519

LinkedIn
followers



96,117

website
views



8

press releases
launched



EU-LIFE Strategy Meeting, FMI, Basel.

2025 MAIN PUBLICATIONS AND EVENTS AT A GLANCE

MARCH



EU-LIFE meets with Ekaterina Zaharieva, new Commissioner for Startups, Research & Innovation



Scientific research is a strategic necessity for resilience and competitiveness in Europe

APRIL



EU-LIFE's 4 elements to strengthen Europe's competitiveness through the European Life Sciences Strategy

MAY



R&I needs a strong place in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)



EU-LIFE Community Meeting

EU-LIFE Science Vision Talk Contest

JUNE



No directionality in MSCA. Joint statement on the proposed introduction of directionality in the draft MSCA Work Programme 2026-2027

JULY



Preserving the foundation of innovation: enhancing early-stage collaborative R&I in FP10



EU-LIFE urges the European Commission, the EU Council and the European Parliament to leverage R&I as a key driving force for Competitiveness through a transformative FP10

SEPTEMBER



Fundamental Research for European Competitiveness

OCTOBER



Raise your voice for science! Open Day at the Barcelona Biomedical Research Park



CoARA WG SAGA workshop: Reforming Research Assessment in Our Institutions: Struggles and Dreams



First European Flagship Conference on Research Security

NOVEMBER



EU-LIFE Strategy Meeting

DECEMBER



Joint amendments to the FP10 legal texts

EU-LIFE INSTITUTES

17
institutes



2
new members

>11,000
members of staff



16
countries

>650
research
groups



>200
technology
facilities

>30%
success rate
in ERC



>80
spin-offs
(since 2014)



EU-LIFE ORGANISATION

EU-LIFE is a collaborative alliance built on the shared expertise and engagement of more than 150 professionals across Europe, working together to strengthen research excellence, governance and policy. The structure of the alliance combines strategic leadership, community-driven initiatives and a central office that supports coordination across the network.

At the core of EU-LIFE's governance is the **Board of Directors**, composed of the directors of EU-LIFE member institutes. Together with **EU-LIFE Executive Director Marta Agostinho, Chair Giulio Superti-Furga, and Co-Chair Marta Międzyńska**, it defines the alliance's strategic direction, ensuring that EU-LIFE's activities reflect the needs and ambitions of leading life science research centres across Europe. Supporting the Board is the **Strategy Group**, which brings together senior representatives from member institutes to help shape the alliance's initiatives and ensure alignment between EU-LIFE's strategic goals and the practical realities of research organisations.

"I greatly appreciate being part of the EU-LIFE community. Our institutes may each have their own identity, yet we are connected by a common pursuit of scientific excellence, similar challenges we navigate, and the successes we achieve. The EU-LIFE meetings feel like gatherings with old friends —warm and collaborative— and I always look forward to them."

Nicolas Favre

Member of the EU-LIFE Strategy Group
Head of Patents and Licensing at FMI



Much of EU-LIFE's work is carried forward through its **Working Groups and Task Forces**, which bring together over 150 experts from member institutes to collaborate on topics ranging from research funding, technology transfer and science communication to sustainability, research careers, training, gender equality, inclusion and diversity. These groups exchange knowledge, develop joint initiatives and produce guidance and recommendations that benefit the wider research community.

Coordination across this network is provided by the **EU-LIFE Office**, based in Barcelona, which supports activities, facilitates collaboration among members, and represents EU-LIFE in European policy.

The **EU-LIFE Office Team** is composed of Marta Agostinho, Executive Director of EU-LIFE; Iris Uribealgo, EU-LIFE Policy Officer; Marijn Huiskamp, EU-LIFE Community Officer; and Esther Dorado-Ladera, EU-LIFE Communications Officer, who work closely with member institutes to advance the alliance's strategic objectives.



EU-LIFE Office Team, CEITEC, Brno.

COMMUNITY MEETING 2025

The EU-LIFE Community Meeting 2025 was hosted by our member institute CEITEC in Brno, Czech Republic, on 21-23 May 2025. It was the perfect opportunity to give a warm welcome to the two new EU-LIFE members, The Francis Crick Institute (UK) and the Ruđer Bošković Institute (Croatia). This annual gathering offers a chance to members of all EU-LIFE Working Groups to catch-up, plan next year's activities, and get specialist training.

"We are very pleased to join EU-LIFE and deepen our engagement with leading research institutes across Europe. At the Crick, we believe that collaboration and knowledge sharing are the cornerstones of scientific progress.

By working together, we can strengthen European cohesion and ensure that independent research institutes continue to play a pivotal role in addressing the scientific challenges of our time for the benefit of all."

Paul Nurse, Director of the Francis Crick Institute (2010-2025)



"As the Director General of the Ruđer Bošković Institute, I am proud of our institute's rich diversity and the vibrant, inclusive environment we have nurtured.

Joining EU-LIFE marks a significant milestone for us, enhancing our capabilities and solidifying our commitment to fostering excellence and innovation in the European research ecosystem. Our strength undoubtedly lies in our people, whose diverse perspectives fuel the innovative research that propels us forward.

Together with EU-LIFE partners, we are poised to make even greater contributions to science and society."


David M. Smith, Director General of RBI



EU-LIFE Community Meeting 2025, CEITEC, Brno.

EU-LIFE SCIENCE VISION TALK CONTEST 2025

This year, the EU-LIFE Community Meeting was co-located with the first EU-LIFE Science Vision Talk Contest, aimed at bringing together scientists for a bold and engaging science communication competition. 18 researchers representing 15 EU-LIFE institutes presented their research in a 4-minute performance in different creative formats that included rapping, dancing, dramatising and other innovative communication techniques. The contest was streamed simultaneously to all EU-LIFE institutes across Europe, allowing colleagues and supporters to watch, cheer, and vote for the winner.

 [click here to watch the performances!](#)

"I am very grateful to have taken part in the EU-LIFE Science Vision Talk Contest because it is absolutely one of the highlights of my PhD experience! I decided to participate because I felt that it was something out of my comfort zone and whenever that happens, I tend to just go for it anyway (within reason)! I don't regret putting myself out there, it was an amazing experience and I met such great people!"

Eleonore Ocaña

Winner of the EU-LIFE Science Vision Talk Contest 2025
PhD Student at Rayon Group, The Babraham Institute



EU-LIFE Science Vision Talk Contest, CEITEC, Brno.

STRATEGY MEETING 2025

This year's **EU-LIFE Strategy Meeting** was hosted by the **Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research (FMI, Switzerland)**. Over two days, discussion centred on key areas shaping the alliance's future, including upcoming European policy developments and initiatives to strengthen research excellence across member institutes. These exchanges demonstrated not only a clear alignment on strategic direction but also a renewed enthusiasm to advance EU-LIFE's mission collectively.

The positive dynamic of the meeting was further reinforced by valuable conversations beyond the formal sessions, notably during a visit to the Novartis Pavillon and a collegial dinner, which helped deepen existing connections and strengthen our shared sense of purpose as a cohesive and forward-thinking community.



Novartis Pavillon, Basel.



EU-LIFE Strategy Meeting 2025, FMI, Basel.

EUROPEAN SCIENCE POLICY

As an alliance of leading research centres in the life sciences, we advocate for a better research value in and for Europe. Contributing to European science policies, and strongly advocating the key role of excellent research for innovation, competitiveness and the society, is a key part of our mission.

Since its foundation in 2013, EU-LIFE has become a relevant stakeholder in European policy participating regularly in the European Commission policy dialogue. EU-LIFE is member of the European Research Area (ERA) Forum, where we represent Research Performing Organisations (RPOs).

"2025 was a decisive year for the future of European research funding. As discussions on the next EU long-term budget and the design of FP10 accelerated, EU-LIFE worked actively to ensure that research and innovation remain at the heart of Europe's competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy."

Marta Agostinho
Executive Director of EU-LIFE



European Commission, Brussels.
Giulio Superti-Furga, Marta Agostinho, Marta Międzyńska.

The Future of European Research & Innovation

HIGH-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

In March, an **EU-LIFE delegation met with Commissioner Ekaterina Zaharieva** to exchange views on the role of research institutes in strengthening Europe's competitiveness. This **timely discussion** reaffirmed our commitment to contribute constructively to shaping the next generation of EU funding instruments.



European Commission, Brussels.
Giulio Superti-Furga, Marta Agostinho, Ekaterina Zaharieva, Marta Międzyńska.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE POLICY DEBATE

Throughout the year, EU-LIFE **responded to key European Commission consultations**, bringing the perspective of research institutes to discussions on the future of European research and innovation policy. In these contributions, EU-LIFE emphasised the importance of a strong and autonomous FP10, sustained and increased investment in discovery-driven research, coherent support across the research and innovation ecosystem, and governance models that safeguard scientific independence.

COORDINATED ADVOCACY FOR FP10

As legislative discussions progressed, EU-LIFE **intensified its advocacy efforts to ensure that the future Framework Programme remains ambitious and effective**. The alliance released an **open letter** in response to the European Commission's proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework, **joined European partners in calling for stronger support** for early-stage collaborative research, and led a **joint appeal** to preserve the bottom-up nature of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). EU-LIFE also worked together with six leading research & innovation stakeholders to co-develop and present **joint amendments** to the FP10 legal texts.



Presentation of FP10 amendments to MEP Christian Ehler, Brussels.

These **amendments were formally presented to the European Parliament's rapporteur for FP10, Christian Ehler**, contributing directly to the ongoing negotiations.

Frontier Research as a Driver for European Competitiveness

As Europe intensifies its focus on global competitiveness, EU-LIFE contributed actively to the debate on the role of research and innovation in strengthening Europe's economic and technological leadership.

Throughout the year, EU-LIFE engaged with policymakers, researchers and stakeholders to **highlight the importance of frontier and collaborative research** as a cornerstone of Europe's competitiveness.

BRINGING RESEARCH INTO THE COMPETITIVENESS DEBATE

In February, EU-LIFE Executive Director Marta Agostinho joined **The Insider podcast** to discuss the implications of the European Commission's Competitiveness Compass. The discussion emphasised the need to maintain a balanced approach to innovation policy, combining strategic industrial priorities with strong support for bottom-up, discovery-driven research.



FRONTIER SCIENCE AND LONG-TERM INNOVATION

EU-LIFE contributed to high-level discussions on how frontier research drives long-term competitiveness.

In April, the **European Research Council (ERC)** hosted a **debate** on the **contribution of research and innovation to Europe's economic future**, featuring a distinguished panel of speakers including Luis Serrano, Director of the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG) and member of the EU-LIFE Board of Directors.



Later in the year, Marta Agostinho participated in the **ERC High-Level Event Competitiveness through Frontier Research** in Copenhagen, where leading voices from research and policy explored how discovery-driven science enables breakthrough innovation.

These discussions reinforced a key message: Europe's global leadership depends on sustained investment in excellent, independent and researcher-driven science.

Strengthening the European Research Area (ERA)

The European Research Area (ERA) aims to create a unified and effective research and innovation ecosystem across Europe. Since its creation, EU-LIFE has actively contributed to this vision, bringing the perspective of independent research institutes to European policy discussions. In 2025, EU-LIFE continued its **engagement as a member of the European Commission's ERA Forum**, helping shape and implement the ERA Policy Agenda.

"The future of the European Research Area depends not only on researchers but also on research managers, who create the conditions for research to thrive. The research management profession is constantly evolving, requiring specialized expertise and collaboration across stakeholders and sectors. ERA Action 17 strengthens research institutions through upskilling, capacity building and networking, leading to more effective project management, optimized resource use, and increased innovation. This initiative benefits not only researchers and research managers but also society as a whole."

Ester Jarour

Member of the EU-LIFE Strategy Group
Head of Strategic Partnerships & International Relations at CEITEC



CONTRIBUTING TO THE ERA POLICY AGENDA

EU-LIFE welcomed the adoption of the **ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027**, which sets the priorities for strengthening Europe's research ecosystem over the coming years. As an active contributor to its development through the ERA Forum, EU-LIFE remains committed to supporting the implementation of ERA policies and contributing to the broader dialogue on strengthening the research and innovation ecosystems in Europe.

FROM POLICY TO ACTION

EU-LIFE contributes to the implementation of **eleven ERA actions and structural policies**.

For example, we actively participate in the new ERA Action on the **responsible use of artificial intelligence in science**. EU-LIFE also co-leads the **ERA Action on New Approach Methodologies (NAMs)**, which promotes innovative, science-driven approaches in biomedical research and regulatory testing.

Through these and other actions, EU-LIFE supports a more coordinated, responsible and forward-looking European research ecosystem.



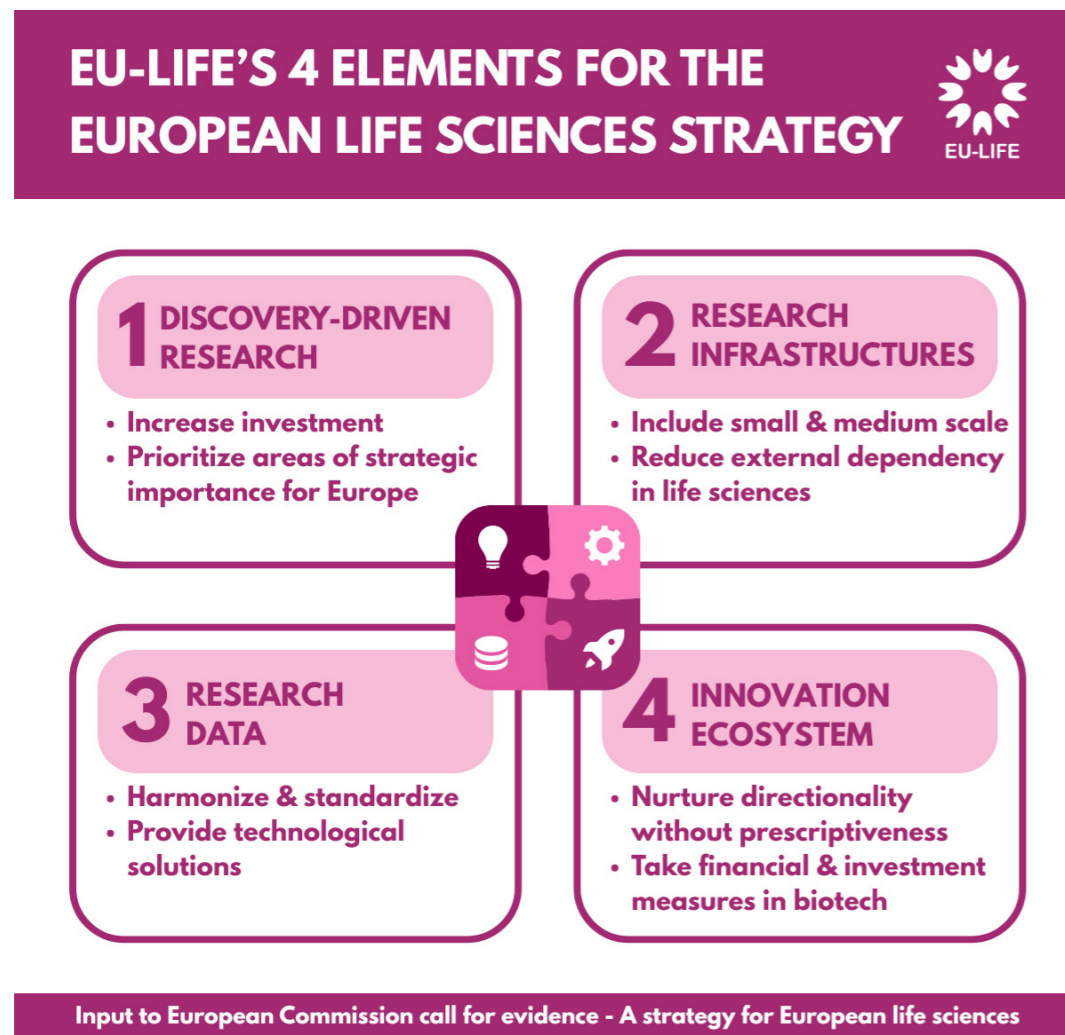
Marta Agostinho, ERA Forum Meeting, Brussels.

Advancing Europe's Leadership in the Life Sciences

Life sciences are one of Europe's greatest scientific strengths and a key driver of health, sustainability and economic prosperity. In 2025, EU-LIFE actively contributed to the European debate on how to enhance this sector and ensure that Europe remains a global leader in life sciences research and innovation.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE EUROPEAN LIFE SCIENCES STRATEGY

EU-LIFE contributed to the European Commission's call for evidence to develop a European Life Sciences Strategy with a **set of recommendations** aimed at reinforcing Europe's scientific and innovation ecosystem.



BRINGING RESEARCH INTO THE POLICY DEBATE

Throughout the year, EU-LIFE engaged in the broader policy discussion surrounding the strategy. In interviews and policy exchanges, EU-LIFE emphasised that Europe's competitiveness in life sciences depends on **sustained investment in fundamental research and stronger support for early-stage innovation.**



FROM STRATEGY TO IMPLEMENTATION

Following the publication of the EU Life Sciences Strategy, EU-LIFE welcomed the recognition of key priorities such as frontier research, innovation investment and critical areas including clinical research and data infrastructure.

At the same time, we highlighted the need for stronger, more concrete actions to support discovery-driven research and ensure that the strategy delivers long-term impact.

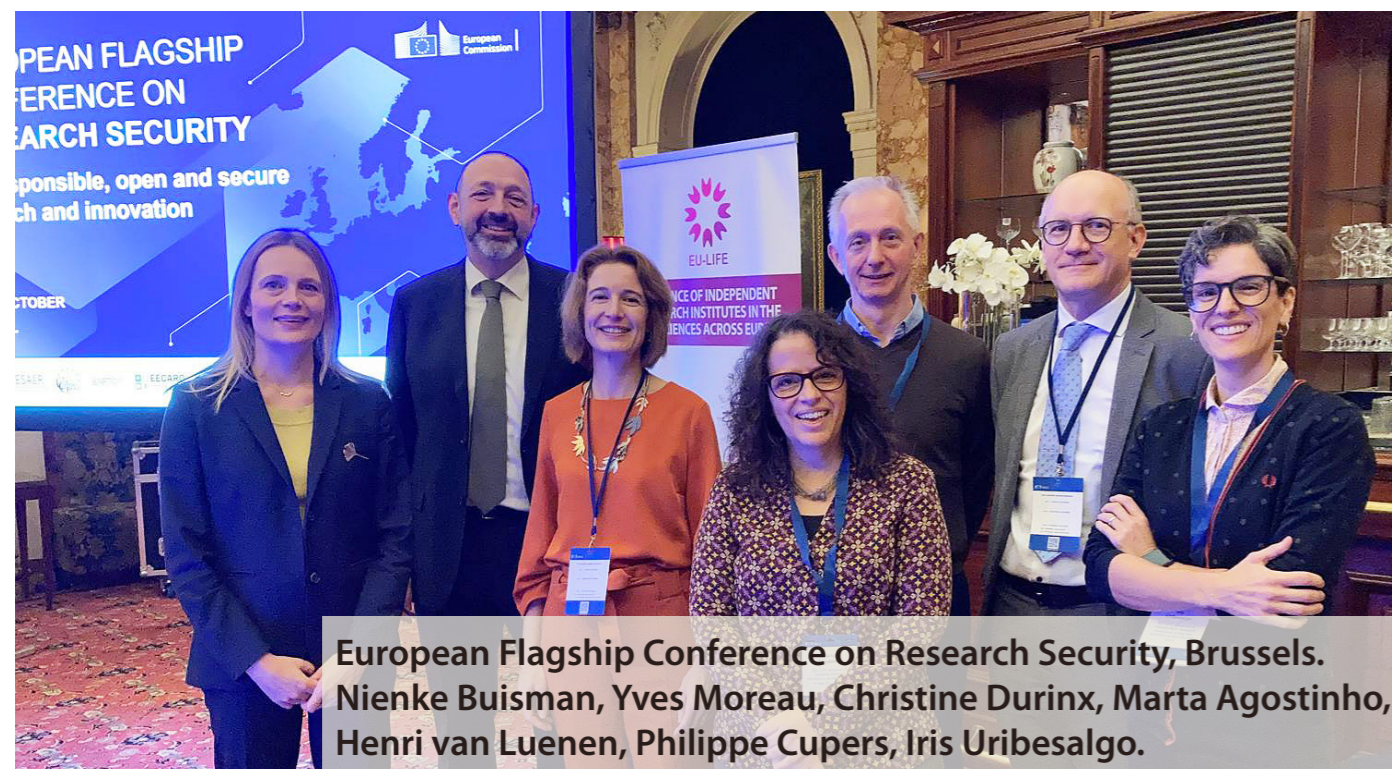
Research Security and Responsible Internationalisation

A EUROPEAN DIALOGUE ON RESEARCH SECURITY

EU-LIFE co-organised the first **European Flagship Conference on Research Security**, together with the European Commission and leading research and innovation organisations. The event brought together a diversity of actors involved in Europe's research and innovation ecosystem, including policymakers and research institutions, to discuss how Europe can safeguard research while maintaining the openness that drives scientific progress.

FROM DISCUSSION TO PRACTICE

EU-LIFE hosted one of the conference's sessions, titled **Research security in practice: making space for an honest conversation**. The panel gathered experts from research institutes, universities and European institutions to explore how research organisations can integrate security considerations into everyday research practice.



European Flagship Conference on Research Security, Brussels. Nienke Buisman, Yves Moreau, Christine Durinx, Marta Agostinho, Henri van Luenen, Philippe Cupers, Iris Uribesalgo.



European Flagship Conference on Research Security, Brussels. Marta Agostinho speaks at the plenary session.

“Our session focused on having an open and honest conversation about research security, not as a restriction, but as a way to strengthen research practice. The discussion showed that integrating the perspectives of different stakeholders is the way forward to build a more balanced and realistic approach to research security. Finding this balance is a shared responsibility that calls for ongoing dialogue between researchers, institutions, funders and policymakers.”

Henri van Luenen
Member of the EU-LIFE Strategy Group
Director of Operations at NKI



Reforming Research Assessment

Across Europe, research organisations are rethinking how scientific work is evaluated. The **Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA)** has brought together a wide range of actors across the research ecosystem to advance more responsible approaches to assessment that recognise the diversity of research contributions and promote research quality, integrity, and collaboration.

EU-LIFE is actively contributing to this effort through its **participation in several CoARA working groups**, including co-chairing one of them.

“Reforming research assessment requires systemic change, and that can only happen if we move forward together.

Progress depends on the commitment of institutions and on active engagement and open dialogue with the scientific community. This must be supported by capacity building and the sharing of practices to drive coherent, responsible and lasting change at a global scale.”

Iris Uribesalgo
EU-LIFE Policy Officer



ADVANCING REFORM THROUGH COLLABORATION

EU-LIFE contributes to the **CoARA Working Group on Academic Career Assessment (ACA)**, which explores how evaluation practices can better support diverse academic careers and recognise a broader range of research contributions. After the publication of the first outputs, the group works on the development of an interactive, conceptual framework designed to support institutions in reforming academic career assessment.

The **CoARA Working Group SAGA**, co-chaired by **EU-LIFE**, continues to progress in the development of an implementation guide for driving change in biomedical research assessment, which aims to support administrative and governance roles in implementing reforms.

ENGAGING RESEARCH COMMUNITIES

Beyond policy discussions, EU-LIFE also works directly with research communities to foster dialogue on research assessment reform. In the framework of the INCAS pilot project from the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG), EU-LIFE moderated a discussion on research culture and assessment that brought together experts on the topic and the institute’s research community. The INCAS project is funded by CoARA cascade funding to explore impact narratives for biomedical research following a co-creation approach to fair implementation.

Later in the year, EU-LIFE co-organised a participatory **workshop in Barcelona** within the CoARA Working Group SAGA, bringing together members of the research community who are actively involved in research assessment reforms within their institutions to exchange experiences and identify practical pathways for implementing reform.



Supporting Research Careers across Europe

Attracting, supporting and retaining research talent is essential for Europe's scientific excellence and long-term competitiveness. In 2025, EU-LIFE continued to **contribute to the European debate on research careers**, highlighting the perspective of research institutes and the importance of creating supportive research environments.

SUPPORTING RESEARCHERS AND RESEARCH CULTURE

EU-LIFE contributed to initiatives aimed at strengthening the research environment itself, such as the **Marie Curie Alumni Association Annual Conference**. This forum provided an excellent opportunity to engage in **discussions on research careers, open science and the future of European research and innovation**, while reinforcing connections across the research ecosystem.

EU-LIFE joined the **YERUN 10th Anniversary Conference**, where conversations focused on how institutions can **create the right conditions for research careers**, including mentoring, transparency and long-term career perspectives.

Through these engagements, EU-LIFE continues to advocate for research careers that enable talent to thrive.



STRENGTHENING RESEARCH CAREERS IN EUROPE

EU-LIFE engaged with policymakers and stakeholders to discuss how research careers can be made more sustainable, transparent and attractive. At the **SECURE Summit**, EU-LIFE Executive Director Marta Agostinho shared the experience of European research institutes in **supporting research careers and contributing to the development of policies** within the European Research Area.

EU-LIFE also participated in discussions on **talent attraction and human resources management in research**, emphasising the need for coordinated action across institutions, national authorities and European programmes to address current challenges in recruiting and retaining researchers.

RESEARCH CULTURE AND GOVERNANCE

Beyond policy advocacy, EU-LIFE works to strengthen the research ecosystem from within. Through its working groups and collaborative initiatives, EU-LIFE supports the development of strong research management practices, fosters inclusive and supportive research environments, and promotes effective governance in research organisations.

In 2025, EU-LIFE continued to facilitate knowledge exchange among its member institutes while developing practical tools, training initiatives and community activities that help research organisations improve their practices and support scientific excellence.

“On a personal level, the EU-LIFE Community Meeting was also a key internal community building moment with the GIMM colleagues present – on both nights we stayed up in the hotel lobby digesting all that we had learned that day and planning how to apply it back in Portugal. The enthusiasm was infectious, and we headed home with bags full of benchmarks, best practices and new contacts.”

Laura Ward

Member of the EU-LIFE Gender Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Working Group
Senior Project Manager at GIMM



EU-LIFE Science Communications Working Group, CEITEC, Brno.

Strengthening Research Management and Institutional Capacity

Effective research organisations rely on solid governance structures and professional research management. EU-LIFE works to strengthen the institutional capacities that support excellent science, fostering collaboration among research managers across its member institutes and contributing to the development of the profession.

SHARING INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

Beyond policy engagement, EU-LIFE promotes the **exchange of good practices and institutional experience among its members**. Through expert discussions, webinars and collaborative initiatives, the alliance facilitates the sharing of approaches to institutional governance, funding strategies and research management practices.

EU-LIFE also contributes to the development of guidance and recommendations for research infrastructures and institutional services. Recent publications from the **Core Facilities Working Group** on **change management in core facilities** (EMBO Reports) and the **lifecycle of technology platforms** provide practical tools for research organisations.

“Being prepared to adapt and change according to organisational need is essential, but managing change can be challenging for everyone. The paper was written to support colleagues throughout the life of a core facility, based on lessons from our shared experience. It is not prescriptive, instead it provides a context-agnostic framework managers can use to help navigate through complex situations.”

Danielle Hoyle

Co-Chair of the EU-LIFE Core Facilities Working Group
Head of Research Operations and Deputy Director of Operations at The Babraham Institute



EU-LIFE Grants & Funding Working Group, CEITEC, Brno.

SUPPORTING THE RESEARCH MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY

In 2025, EU-LIFE contributed to the development of the **European Competence Framework for Research Managers** (RM Comp), an important milestone within the European Research Area that recognises the key role played by research management professionals in enabling scientific excellence.

EU-LIFE continues to support initiatives that help build a strong and connected community of research managers across Europe.

Supporting Researchers and Career Development

Creating supportive research environments is essential for attracting and retaining talent. EU-LIFE works with its member institutes to promote initiatives that **strengthen research culture** and provide researchers with opportunities for professional development and international collaboration.

FOSTERING INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

EU-LIFE promotes more inclusive research environments through initiatives such as the **Pathfinder Mentorship Programme for Postdoctoral Women**, developed by the **Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group**.

In addition, the Better Together sessions create spaces for open dialogue within the network. One of the discussions in 2025 focused on **psychological safety and inclusivity in research environments**, helping institutions reflect on how to build healthier and more supportive research cultures.



Pathfinder Mentorship Programme for Postdoctoral Women, Ghent. Agnes Uhereczky, Danica Drpic, Saskia Lippens.

SUPPORTING MOBILITY AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Several EU-LIFE programmes focus on supporting researchers at key stages of their careers. The **EU-LIFE Postdoctoral Exchange Programme**, set up by the **Postdoc Initiative**, enables postdoctoral researchers to gain experience in other leading European research institutes, fostering mobility, collaboration and the exchange of knowledge across the network.

“Invited seminars and research visits provide crucial networking opportunities, but early-career researchers often fall by the wayside for lack of funding, as they are still developing their network. That’s why the EU-LIFE Postdoctoral Exchange Programme aims to empower postdocs to independently undertake such visits in view of networking and future career planning.”

Stijn Hawinkel

Member of the EU-LIFE Postdoc Initiative
Postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Plant Systems Biology, VIB



The **EU-LIFE ERC Masterclass**, developed by the **Grants & Funding Working Group**, supports researchers in preparing competitive proposals for the European Research Council, pooling expertise from across EU-LIFE institutes to strengthen grant success across the network. This year, the group has shared their experience in an **article at FEBS Communications**.

In addition, the **Recruitment & Training Working Group** organises **Career Tracks webinars**, exploring career paths both within and beyond academia, and encouraging dialogue between researchers and professionals working in different sectors.

Promoting Innovation and Knowledge Transfer

Transforming scientific discoveries into societal and economic impact requires strong connections between research institutions, industry and investors, as well as policy action.

EU-LIFE contributed to this year's **public consultations from the European Commission** regarding innovation, such as the **EU Innovation Act** and the **EU Biotech Act**, bringing the perspectives from our community.

EXCHANGES WITH INNOVATORS

Innovation is also an important theme in the strategic discussions among EU-LIFE directors and senior leadership. During the **EU-LIFE Strategy Meetings**, **invited innovators and entrepreneurs** share their experiences in translating scientific discoveries into successful ventures. At the 2025 meeting, these exchanges focused on the concrete challenges of building research-based companies and translating scientific excellence into sustainable innovation pathways, offering valuable perspectives for research leaders.

"Bringing innovators and entrepreneurs into the EU-LIFE Strategy Meetings creates a valuable space for open dialogue between research leaders and those translating discoveries into real-world solutions.

These exchanges help us better understand the challenges of building effective innovation ecosystems and support our institutes in strengthening their approaches to technology transfer, entrepreneurship and collaboration beyond academia."

Marta Miączyńska
Co-chair of EU-LIFE
Director of IIMCB



SUPPORTING EARLY-STAGE INNOVATION

Through its **Technology Transfer Working Group**, EU-LIFE supports initiatives that help researchers bring promising ideas closer to real-world applications.

A central activity in this area is the **EU-LIFE Pitching Event**, an annual online event that provides researchers who are developing innovative technologies with an opportunity to present their projects to investors, technology transfer experts and innovation professionals. The event helps researchers refine their value propositions, receive expert feedback and explore potential pathways for commercialisation.

The EU-LIFE Pitching Event was **highlighted by the European Commission as a successful story from the research management community**. Together with other examples of impactful work from research managers across Europe, it was published in the **Catalog of best practices and achievements**. This activity was also showcased in a **video series** of five particularly inspiring stories.



EU-LIFE Strategy Meeting 2025, FMI, Basel.

Advancing Sustainable Research Practices

Sustainability is becoming an essential component of responsible research practice. EU-LIFE works with its member institutes to promote approaches that reduce the environmental impact of research activities and support more sustainable institutional practices.

INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY INTO RESEARCH

In 2025, EU-LIFE contributed to the development of the updated **MSCA Green Charter**, which promotes sustainable practices across European research and innovation activities. This initiative reflects a broader commitment within the EU-LIFE community to embed sustainability principles into research organisations.

“The new MSCA Green Charter sends a strong signal for sustainability in research — especially at a time when climate action isn’t always at the top of the agenda. It offers young researchers practical guidance to reduce their environmental impact without adding bureaucracy. Hopefully, this is just the beginning of broader support for sustainable research on the EU level.”

Christian Panetzky

Member of the EU-LIFE Sustainability Task Force
Sustainability Coordinator at Max Delbrück Center



EU-LIFE members also contributed to discussions on sustainable research practices at international forums, including an **EMBO workshop on sustainability in research**, where Henri van Luenen represented EU-LIFE and shared experiences and approaches to integrating environmental responsibility into research infrastructures and laboratory practices.

SHARING PRACTICES ACROSS THE NETWORK

Through its **Sustainability Task Force**, EU-LIFE facilitates the exchange of expertise among member institutes on topics such as sustainable laboratory practices, institutional climate strategies and carbon accounting.

Initiatives such as the Better Together sessions provide opportunities for members of the network to learn from one another and discuss practical approaches to sustainability. In 2025, a session dedicated to **carbon accounting in research organisations** explored how institutes can measure and reduce their environmental footprint.



Using Data to Learn, Compare and Improve

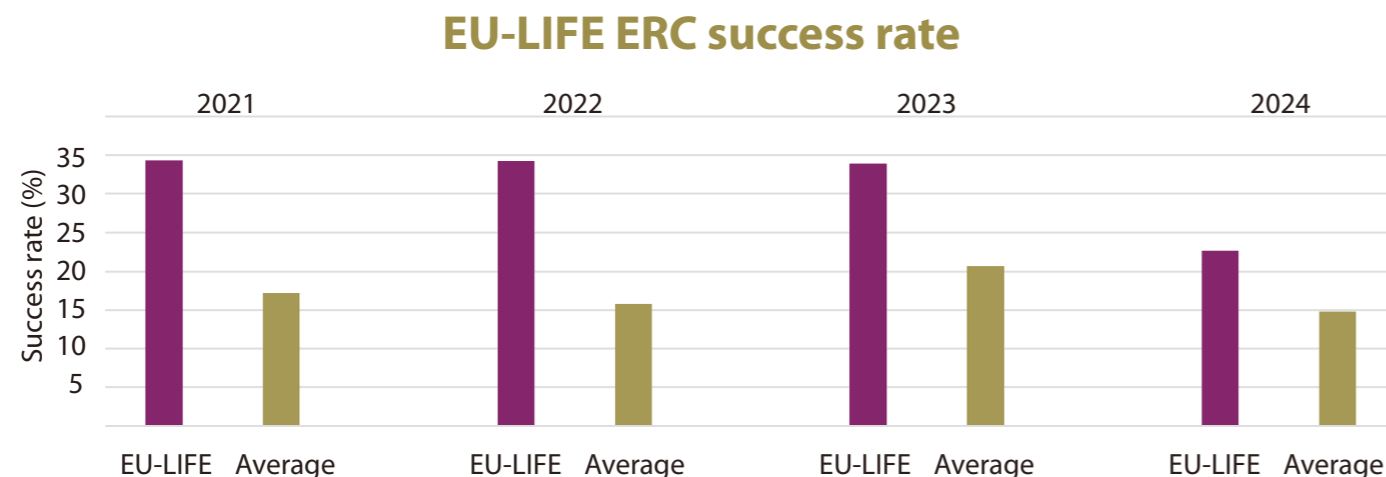
One of EU-LIFE's great strengths lies in the diversity of its member institutes. Differences in size, structure and organisation provide a unique opportunity to compare practices and learn from one another. Through **benchmarking activities**, EU-LIFE supports its members in understanding their performance, identifying assets and opportunities, and improving institutional practices.

These datasets are used internally by institutes to inform strategic decisions, support evaluation processes, and report to governing bodies and funding agencies. They also provide valuable insights into how research organisations' practices evolve over time.

LONG-TERM DATASETS AND INSTITUTIONAL INSIGHTS

Since 2013, EU-LIFE collects annual benchmarking data covering **key indicators such as staff structure, gender distribution, funding, research outputs and technology transfer**.

EU-LIFE also gathers **data on Horizon Europe grant applications and outcomes**. Between 2021 and 2024, for example, institutes submitted nearly 300 ERC proposals, achieving a success rate of around 30%, significantly above the European average.



DEEP-DIVES INTO KEY AREAS

Targeted benchmarking exercises provide deeper insights into specific activities. **Data from 129 core facilities across 13 institutes** supports the analysis of staffing, costs and funding models, helping improve the management of research infrastructures.

In addition, the **EU-LIFE HR Working Group** has developed an innovative **benchmarking exercise on remuneration and benefits**, helping institutes better understand their competitiveness and employment conditions.

"The remuneration benchmarking data is valuable not only for comparing aggregated figures, but also for understanding how institutes structure their employment conditions in practice.

Looking into the completed templates provides important qualitative insights — for example, revealing differences in benefits such as pension schemes — that are not immediately visible in the headline data."

Montserrat Ruano

Member of the EU-LIFE HR Working Group
Head of Human Resources at CRG



FROM DATA TO PRACTICE

Beyond quantitative comparisons, these exercises generate valuable qualitative insights into how institutes operate. By combining data analysis with community exchange, EU-LIFE enables its members to **translate benchmarking insights into concrete improvements**, strengthening research management and institutional performance across the alliance.

Engaging Local Communities and Stakeholders

Engaging with local communities and the wider public is also essential to strengthen science and research culture. Through outreach activities and dialogue with regional stakeholders, EU-LIFE promotes **discussion on science policy, the value of research, and the conditions needed for scientific progress** to benefit society.

DIALOGUE WITH LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS ON SCIENCE POLICY

EU-LIFE participated in Cafè de la Recerca, an **event organised by the Catalan Federation of Foundations**. During the session, Marta Agostinho shared insights into European science policy developments and explored **how institutions and foundations can engage more actively with European research funding opportunities and policy discussions**. The discussion provided a valuable opportunity to connect EU-level policy debates with local stakeholders and engage in dialogue within the regional research ecosystem.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON THE VALUE OF RESEARCH

At **OpenPRBB**, organised by the Barcelona Biomedical Research Park (PRBB), EU-LIFE invited visitors to explore how advancing science requires more than discoveries. Through an **interactive activity** designed for visitors of all ages, **participants reflected on the many elements that enable science to move forward** and shared their ideas about how researchers, policymakers and citizens can contribute to building a strong research ecosystem. The activity sparked lively conversations with the public and highlighted the importance of engaging society in discussions about the future of science.



“As an alliance that brings together leading life sciences institutes across Europe, EU-LIFE is committed not only to shaping science policy but also to engaging citizens in conversations about how science works. Events like OpenPRBB remind us that advancing science is a collective effort — involving researchers, policymakers, funders and the public alike.”

Marta Agostinho
Executive Director of EU-LIFE



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EU-LIFE is an alliance of research centres whose mission is to support and strengthen European research excellence. EU-LIFE members are leading research institutes in their countries and internationally renowned for producing excellent research, widely transferring knowledge and nurturing talent.

EU-LIFE Partners

Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG, Spain) | Central European Institute of Technology (CEITEC, Czech Republic) | European Institute of Oncology (IEO, Italy) | Flanders Institute For Biotechnology (VIB, Belgium) | Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research (FMI, Switzerland) | Gulbenkian Institute for Molecular Medicine (GIMM, Portugal) | Institut Curie (Curie, France) | Institute for Molecular Medicine Finland (FIMM, Finland) | Institute of Molecular Biology & Biotechnology (IMBB FORTH, Greece) | International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology in Warsaw (IIMCB, Poland) | Max Delbrück Center (MDC, Germany) | Research Center for Molecular Medicine of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (CeMM, Austria) | Ruđer Bošković Institute (RBI, Croatia) | The Babraham Institute (Babraham, United Kingdom) | The Francis Crick Institute (Crick, United Kingdom) | The Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI, The Netherlands) | The University of Copenhagen Biotech Research & Innovation Centre (BRIC, Denmark)

