

Investing In What Makes Europe Strong: Research And Innovation In The Next EU Budget

Report dated 9 October 2026 from a joint event held in Brussels on 9 September 2026

Europe's next budget will shape its capacity to produce new scientific knowledge, develop critical technologies and bring talented people together across borders at the scale and speed required. These strengths are built and reinforced over many years. Budget decisions made now will affect what Europe can achieve well beyond 2034.

This was the central message of a discussion convened in Brussels on 9 September by CESAER, the Coimbra Group, EUA, EU-LIFE, The Guild, LERU and YERUN. The event brought EU policymakers together with leaders of universities and research institutes to discuss what the next Horizon Europe programme (FP10) must deliver for Europe's future and why Europe cannot afford to underfund research and innovation.

In a **joint statement published on the occasion of the event**, the seven organisers call for at least €200 billion for FP10, a stable and protected budget, balanced support across research and innovation, a timely start in January 2028, and stronger investment in member states. The discussions showed how these commitments reinforce one another: investment at scale must be accompanied by the conditions that allow ideas, people and collaborations to develop over time.

"The choices made now will shape Europe's capacity to compete, innovate and act for decades to come."

Joint statement

Key takeaways

Research and innovation make Europe's other ambitions achievable. Progress in food sovereignty, health, clean energy, security and digital technologies depends on new knowledge and discoveries. Investing in R&I strengthens Europe's capacity to deliver across these priorities.

Match Europe's ambitions with at least €200 billion for FP10. The next Horizon Europe needs the resources to support excellent research, develop talent and connect expertise across borders. Underinvestment today would weaken Europe's capabilities for decades to come.

Give research the certainty it needs to deliver. Safeguard FP10's budget, ensure predictable annual funding and launch the first calls in January 2028. Researchers and institutions need confidence to build teams, invest and sustain long-term collaboration.

Sustain a balanced research and innovation system. Support fundamental research alongside innovation and draw on the strengths of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and the social sciences, humanities and arts (SSHA). Connect FP10 effectively with the European Competitiveness Fund while preserving each programme's autonomy and purpose.

Keep excellence and talent at the heart of FP10. Academic freedom, research integrity, openness and collaboration create the conditions for researchers to pursue ambitious ideas and generate discoveries that Europe cannot yet anticipate.

Strengthen European and national investment together. European cooperation brings scale and complementary expertise, but cannot compensate for insufficient national funding. Strong research, education and innovation systems across member states are essential to Europe's collective success.

Give FP10 the scale and certainty to deliver

The European Commission's proposal of €175 billion for the next Horizon Europe provides the starting point for negotiations. The seven organisations call for at least €200 billion, in line with the European Parliament's proposal. Inflation and rising research costs make it essential to assess what the budget can deliver in practice, alongside the growing expectations placed on the programme.

Siegfried Mureşan, the European Parliament's co-rapporteur on the EU's long-term budget, framed the negotiations as a choice about the Europe member states want to build. Competitiveness, security and resilience all depend on research and innovation. Delivering these ambitions also requires predictability: organisations need confidence in future funding to recruit people, establish facilities and build partnerships capable of operating at the global frontier.

Research and innovation underpin progress across Europe's priorities. New knowledge and technologies strengthen the capacity to improve health, develop sustainable agriculture, advance clean energy and reinforce security. Investment in FP10 therefore helps Europe deliver across its wider ambitions.

The discussion connected the size of FP10's budget to the need to safeguard it throughout the programme. A stable financial envelope and annual funding profile would enable institutions to plan and sustain long-term work. New priorities should be supported by additional resources, while agreement on the next EU budget must come in time for the first calls to launch in January 2028.

New EU "own resources" were discussed as a possible contribution to a more ambitious overall budget. **Fredrik Erixon**, founding Director of the European Centre for International Political Economy, argued that new own resources should provide durable additional revenue, avoiding reliance on shrinking tax bases or the diversion of existing national revenues. Their potential future availability, however, cannot replace a firm commitment to FP10's funding from the outset.

"The new budget needs to be a budget for investments. New own resources will be essential to adopt a sufficient budget for R&I and other sectors as well."

Siegfried Mureşan



Back the ideas that will shape Europe's future

Fredrik Erixon argued that Europe needs to generate more growth from new ideas. Research universities and institutes are central to this effort, bringing together knowledge, talent and entrepreneurship and helping regions develop a more diverse economic base. Addressing Europe's productivity gap requires a much greater commitment to research and development from governments and businesses.

"We need a big bang in R&I spending."

Fredrik Erixon



His challenge extended to the research and innovation community itself, which must make a stronger case for the investment Europe needs.

That investment must also support discoveries whose applications cannot yet be anticipated. **Maria Leptin**, President of the European Research Council, explained how funding excellent ideas and training researchers builds the broad base of knowledge from which future advances emerge. Viewed as a portfolio of investments, FP10 can deliver benefits in different forms and over different timescales.

"We cannot predict which discoveries will prove groundbreaking — that uncertainty is intrinsic to research. Yet, we know that breakthroughs in research spark new technologies. For this reason, investing in excellent research is a strategic necessity for Europe."

Maria Leptin



Stephanie Wehner, Professor of quantum information at Delft University of Technology and Director of the European Quantum Internet Alliance, illustrated how frontier research and European collaboration can build on one another. European Research Council grants helped establish scientific foundations that subsequent collaborative funding brought together. She stressed that funding for frontier research in physics proved critical to building Europe's leadership in quantum internet technologies. The European Quantum Internet Alliance now combines expertise across countries to advance these technologies at a speed and scale beyond the reach of any single member state.

Together, these contributions showed how Europe's technological ambitions depend on sustained support for discovery and early collaborative research. Public investment allows researchers to explore promising ideas while their eventual applications and commercial value remain uncertain.

Connect research to innovation while protecting its foundations

Turning research strengths into innovations that benefit society requires effective connections between funding instruments. A central theme was how FP10 should interact with the proposed European Competitiveness Fund (ECF).

Eszter Lakos, the European Parliament's shadow rapporteur on the FP10 Specific Programme, placed this relationship in the context of global competition for talent and critical technologies. Europe needs to generate new knowledge and retain the capacity to shape how technologies are developed and used. She supported coordination between FP10 and the ECF, with clear safeguards to preserve the autonomy of each programme.

"The upcoming Horizon Europe is an opportunity for greater unity, wider coherence and a key instrument to address global challenges."

Eszter Lakos



Linda Doyle, Provost of Trinity College Dublin and Chair of LERU, highlighted the need to clarify who would be responsible for ensuring alignment between FP10 and the ECF. Clear responsibility matters for how the programmes work together and how their distinct purposes are maintained.

The discussion connected programme design with the foundations of successful innovation. **Gregor Majdič**, Rector of the University of Ljubljana and an EUA Board member, stressed that research develops knowledge and talent, including when it does not lead directly to a product or company. Stronger pathways towards application depend on sustaining that scientific base.

“We need to strengthen the bridges between fundamental research to breakthrough innovation and the market, but not at the expense of the foundations. With a weak foundation and without strong fundamental research, the bridge will collapse.”

Gregor Majdič



Christine Durinx, Managing Director of VIB and an EU-LIFE Board member, explained the complementary roles of public and private investment: public funding supports high-risk, high-reward research at stages where uncertainty deters private investment, creating opportunities for subsequent investment to bring results towards application and scale.

“EU investment in R&I adds scale to build a strong industry, high-value jobs and strategic autonomy.”

Christine Durinx



These contributions underlined the importance of balanced support across research and innovation. FP10 should sustain excellent research, talent, research infrastructures and the earlier stages of innovation. The ECF and other instruments can support deployment and market uptake, with effective connections helping discoveries progress towards societal and economic benefit. Durinx also highlighted the scale that European investment brings to this effort.

Balance also requires Europe to draw on the strengths of all disciplines. Majdič called for greater involvement of the social sciences, arts and humanities, including in research on artificial intelligence, while Doyle emphasised competitiveness grounded in European values. Understanding how people and societies shape—and are shaped by—advanced technologies is essential to their successful development and use.

“When we talk about competitiveness, we should also ask what kind of economies and societies we are comparing ourselves with. Europe’s goal should be to make its own model competitive, grounded firmly in European values and norms.”

Linda Doyle



Strengthen the national foundations of European cooperation

European programmes depend on strong research and innovation systems across member states. **Rianne Letschert**, the Netherlands’ Minister of Education, Culture and Science, stressed that EU funding alone cannot overcome fragmentation between national systems. Stronger cooperation must be supported by effective research and innovation ecosystems and sustained investment in research, education and the people who create and apply knowledge.

“Investing in knowledge is not a cost, it is an investment that gives significant returns. We need this return on investment, in research, in innovation and in education to turn new ideas into technologies and solutions.”

Rianne Letschert



Adam Kola, Vice-Rector for Research at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and YERUN Vice-President, illustrated the consequences when those conditions are weakened. Expertise is gradually lost when research teams cannot be sustained or excellent proposals remain unfunded, and rebuilding that capacity takes years. European funding connects researchers and institutions across borders, but cannot compensate for insufficient national investment.

Kola also emphasised the need to widen access to research capacity and connect excellence across Europe.

“Talent and excellent ideas are widely distributed across Europe, but access to research capacity and opportunity is not. Distributed excellence means enabling outstanding researchers and teams wherever they are, while connecting emerging research centres and regions with Europe’s established centres of excellence.”

Adam Kola



An ambitious FP10 must therefore go hand in hand with stronger national and regional investment. European cooperation gives researchers and institutions access to complementary expertise, facilities and capabilities across the continent, allowing each country to achieve more. Sustaining this shared capacity requires member states to strengthen and scale up the research, education and innovation systems on which it rests.

Make the case together

The discussions highlighted a shared responsibility to explain what investment in research and innovation makes possible. Universities, research institutes and businesses can show citizens and policymakers how European cooperation generates knowledge, develops talent and creates solutions across Europe's priorities.

Closing the event, **Orla Feely**, President of University College Dublin and President of CESAER, emphasised the need for stability, certainty and balance, with excellence and talent at the heart of FP10. She also called for careful consideration of its relationship with the European Competitiveness Fund and the evolving intersection between civilian research and defence-oriented activities. Alongside these choices, she urged the community to build wider support for research and innovation.

"We need to persuade. We need to win hearts and minds."

Orla Feely



The seven organisers' joint statement provides a shared basis for that effort: at least €200 billion for FP10, protected and predictable funding, balanced investment, a timely start and stronger national commitments. Securing these conditions would enable Europe to build on its research strengths and develop the knowledge and capabilities needed for the decades ahead.



Event details

Date and venue

9 September 2026, University Foundation, Brussels.

Co-organisers

CESAER, the Coimbra Group, EUA, EU-LIFE, The Guild, LERU, YERUN.

Programme

Welcome

Charlotte Van Velthoven-Geerdink, master of ceremonies, and the organising networks.

Setting the scene

Fredrik Erixon, founding Director of the European Centre for International Political Economy.

What FP10 must deliver for Europe's future

Keynote contributions by Rianne Letschert and Eszter Lakos, followed by a discussion with Linda Doyle and Gregor Majdič, moderated by Ludovic Thilly, Vice-Rector of the University of Poitiers and Chair of the Coimbra Group.

Why Europe cannot afford to underfund FP10 in times of crisis

Keynote contributions by Siegfried Mureşan and Stephanie Wehner, followed by a discussion with Maria Leptin, Christine Durinx and Adam Kola, moderated by Jan Palmowski, Secretary-General of The Guild.

Concluding remarks

Orla Feely, President of University College Dublin and President of CESAER.





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