

Estonia's Positions on the 10th EU Research & Innovation Framework Programme (2028-2034)

Estonia believes that Europe's global competitiveness is based on the growth of its research, development and innovation (R&D&I) capacity. This must be reflected as a priority when designing support measures. To ensure the efficient use of resources, research and innovation (R&I) **funding has to be planned in synergy with other European Union (EU) instruments**, including Cohesion Policy funds.

We consider it important **to maintain a balance between funding basic and applied research and innovation projects.**

- When developing technological solutions, activities have to be supported **throughout the entire value chain**, including through equity investments, to enable new technological solutions to reach the market and influence the development of the economy and society.
- Basic research is the foundation of innovation capacity, making it crucial to provide efficient funding for research at **lower Technology Readiness Levels (TRL 1-4)**.
- To support excellent research and attract top researchers to European universities, it is necessary to enhance the **attractiveness and equitable accessibility of the European Research Council (ERC) grants**, without compromising the quality of research.
- We emphasize the importance of continuing to support the independence, mobility, and networking of **young researchers** to foster their self-fulfilment, professional development, and contribution to the broader development of the EU.
- To accelerate the application of research results, greater support has to be provided for the **cooperation between research and development (R&D) institutions and companies**, including for applied research.

The **sectoral objectives of R&I have to be in line with the overall priorities of the EU**, taking into account the shifting geopolitical landscape and global challenges.

- The EU has to take a more **proactive role in developing artificial intelligence (AI) technologies**, while also supporting their widespread adoption across all areas of life.
- Climate and environmental targets remain critically important, including **securing the necessary funding for the development of clean technologies**.
- **Contributions to biomedical, translational, clinical, epidemiological, and public health research** must continue to advance health and wellbeing.
- To increase Europe's security capacities, we support opening up co-funding opportunities for research into **dual-use technologies**, and **cross-utilizing knowledge created under the Framework Programme for the European Defence Fund projects**.
- To ensure enduring internal and external security, **cybersecurity** has to be included among the **strategic focus areas of the Framework Programme**.

We consider it essential **to continue with the Widening measures**, as the gap in R&I capacity still persists in Europe. Widening measures have to take greater account of **the specificities of national R&I systems and support participation in other measures of the Framework Programme**. The structure of these measures has to **support gradual progress**, opening up new opportunities as development progresses.

We consider it necessary to **simplify the intervention logic and processes** of the Framework Programme and **reduce the administrative burden** related to participation. To accelerate procedures, **AI should be employed** appropriately, with careful management of the associated risks.

Cooperation in R&D&I with reliable partners outside the EU has to be strengthened, while adhering to the EU's sanctions policy, **and excluding collaboration with Russia and countries aiding Russia in its aggression**.

Fragmentation and overlaps in instruments supporting R&I capacity must be reduced. The Framework Programme has to fund **only the measures that aim to increase R&I capacity**.

- It is necessary to **rely on already proven instruments**, such as the ERC grants and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA).
- We support **merging the tasks of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the European Innovation Council (EIC)** to reduce overlaps and increase efficiency.
- The **number of EU Partnerships** in the Framework Programme **has to be reduced** and the Partnership portfolio could be established with a single decision at the start of the Framework Programme. The management of Partnerships must ensure equal opportunities for researchers from Member States of different sizes and capacities. This requires the **diversification of eligible funding sources, reduction of bureaucracy related to participation, and rules for calls that better address the needs of different countries and sectors**.
- The **implementation of the EU Missions**, designed to solve major societal challenges, **has to be managed and funded by the European Commission's Directorates-General responsible for their execution**. This approach will ensure that the Missions align with sectoral objectives and deliver results which can be implemented in practice.