

Warsaw, Poland

11 March 2025

## WARSAW DECLARATION

### on the strategic role of the future Union Research & Innovation Framework Programme for EU competitiveness and beyond

We, the EU ministers responsible for research, gathered in Warsaw, Poland, during the informal meeting of research ministers, held under the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, on 10 and 11 March 2025, declare the following:

#### On the legacy of the Union Framework Programme for R&I

- o We recall that in line with the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the multiannual framework programme for research and technological development **is to cover among others the research activities of the Union**, the setting up of a minimum overall amount and the details rules for the Union financial participation.
- o We acknowledge that throughout its 40-year history, the R&I framework programmes have proven to be the **Union main instrument for fostering groundbreaking science and innovation**. These framework programmes have supported human wellbeing, prosperity and security, the

Union's competitiveness, economic stability and a strong single market, contributing to a healthy planet while addressing key socio-economic challenges. They have also played an important role in safeguarding democracy, strengthening common European values, and protecting academic freedom.

- o The recent Union R&I framework programmes – Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe – have become the world's major **transnational programmes financing science and innovation**, enhancing Europe's competitive edge globally.

- o We therefore call on the European Commission to further build **on the indisputable legacy of self-standing framework programmes for R&I** and invite the European Commission to draft its initial proposal in respect of this legacy and in close cooperation with the Member States.

#### **On the future strategic role**

- o Inspired by the recent reports of Mario Draghi ('The future of European competitiveness'), Enrico Letta ('Much more than a market') and the high-level expert group led by Manuel Heitor ('Align, Act, Accelerate'), we welcome the initiative of the European Commission's President Ursula von der Leyen to place **R&I at the heart of the European economic agenda**.

- o We believe the new framework programme should be designed to **significantly accelerate groundbreaking research and innovations** in Europe, so as to **improve living conditions of the European citizens, to boost competitiveness of the**

entire Union and economies of its Member States, contribute to the EU's security, sustainability, resilience and technological sovereignty, strengthen the European Research Area, and allow the European Union to **tackle challenges, urgencies and emerging threats** of diverse backgrounds more effectively.

- o We call on the future Union Framework Programme for R&I to **enhance the EU's capacity as the best research work environment in the world**, to retain top talents and attract the best researchers from around the globe.

- o The future framework programme should foster **the creation of new transregional and transnational R&I collaboration networks** and **enhance new R&I cooperation patterns** across Europe, bringing together R&I professionals of different disciplines and backgrounds.

- o We believe that the future Union Framework Programme for R&I should **help complete the EU Single Market** through the so-called "fifth freedom".

- o We expect the next Union R&I Framework Programme **to provide space for experimentation, risk-taking, and learning from failure**, as these are key drivers of breakthrough science and innovation. The programme should foster a strategic, forward-looking approach, where science and innovation help define Europe's future direction.

- o The subsequent Union R&I Framework Programme should continue working for empowering women and other underrepresented

groups in R&I and supporting diverse talents in a spirit of equality and inclusiveness.

- o We stress that the future Union R&I Framework Programme should contribute to the development of social and environmental technologies, which will support research and innovation that have a positive impact on Europe's future and increase society's trust and acceptance of science and innovation.

- o We also pay attention to ensuring the continuation of innovation in the field of civil security research. Priority should be given to maintaining Europe's strategic autonomy in key technological areas, which will allow for greater independence in unstable times.

### On budget

- o We call for an adequate **budget for the next Union R&I Framework Programme matching its strategic role**, and stress that **none of the future instruments** based on R&I capacity, or supporting beneficiaries from R&I, **should be funded at the expense of the framework programme**.

- o We stress that **increased coordination** is needed among European, national, and regional financing sources relevant for R&I.

- o With public budgets increasingly under pressure in the EU, the future Union R&I Framework Programme should enable strengthening existing and developing new possibilities **to pool R&I investment**, with a particular focus on promoting and enhancing

involvement and investment from the private sector.

- o We recall that this declaration is without prejudice to the negotiations on the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework.

### On excellence

- o We stress that the future Union R&I Framework Programme should continue funding the **most excellent researchers and innovators**, based on open competition, fair and transparent rules, and inclusive transnational cooperation, involving the best talents from across Europe.

- o We recall the pivotal role played by the **European Research Council (ERC) and the European Innovation Council (EIC)** in the current Horizon Europe framework programme and we call upon the Commission to preserve their independence and expand their role in the next Union R&I Framework Programme. We acknowledge **the undeniable achievements of the ERC in supporting frontier research** in Europe and offering the excellent scientists an opportunity to develop their groundbreaking projects, which have resulted in fourteen Nobel Prizes so far.

- o We believe that **research and technology infrastructures**, in particular those supported with European funding, **should boost the creation of R&I excellence hubs in Europe**, gather the best talents from public and private sectors, and help train the new excellent R&I professionals.

## On closing the R&I gap with the global leaders and within the EU

- o We acknowledge that Europe should refocus its collective efforts to **close the innovation gap with the global leaders** like the US and China, particularly in high technology.
- o The next Union R&I Framework Programme needs to **enhance translating excellence in science into excellence in market and societal uptake** faster and more effectively. This requires setting up strategic priorities, an efficient management of knowledge assets and valorisation, as well as increased engagement of all R&I ecosystem players.
- o We stress that for European researchers and entrepreneurs the route from laboratory to market is littered with barriers, and the future Union R&I Framework Programme should **deliver instruments to overcome the "European Paradox"** (of excellent research leading to only weak market success).
- o We believe that closing the innovation gap between the Union and global leaders also requires efforts towards **decreasing the R&I gap within Europe**. The new R&I Framework Programme should **enhance R&I excellence across the Union** and help to tackle fragmentation of the European Research Area, and of the European R&I ecosystem at large.
- o The next Framework Programme for R&I should **strengthen research cooperation with global partners** while safeguarding **strategic interests**. It should reinforce international R&D collaborations in key research and technology areas while ensuring

research security, intellectual property protection and reciprocity.

- o The next Union Framework Programme for R&I should also ensure significant participation of the European small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the R&D collaboration.

### On synergies

- o We call for **effective and efficient synergies** between the new Union R&I Framework Programme and other key initiatives relevant for the R&I ecosystem: cohesion policy, the EU Competitiveness Fund, the European Clean Deal, the EU Life Science Strategy, the EU strategy for start-ups and scale-ups, the EU strategy on research and technology infrastructures, the ERA Act, the Innovation Act, the new European Artificial Intelligence strategy, as well as the European green, digital and industrial agenda among others.