

FP10: Keeping the environment at the heart of Europe's future

We, the Directors of the Partnership for European Environmental Research (PEER), would like to contribute to the discussion around the upcoming Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10). Our partnership encompasses eight of the largest environmental research institutes¹ in Europe, comprising over 9,500 staff and an annual combined budget of over 1.2 billion Euros, having played a key role in the delivery of earlier framework programmes.

Europe's leadership in sustainability is setting a powerful example. Investing into the environment is the basis for European competitiveness (e.g. pioneering sustainable technologies), reduces risks to the business and finance sector (e.g. flood and drought risks), guarantees healthy ecosystems and nutrition (e.g. transformations in the food sector) and increases the health and wellbeing of citizens (e.g. mitigating infectious diseases, mental health). **Therefore, economic growth cannot be achieved without considering environmental change and management. It is essential to give a prominent place to the environment and environmental research in the FP10. Ignoring this would undermine Europe's pathway into a successful sustainable future.**

Being a community of research institutes dedicated to policy-oriented research and co-operation with stakeholders – governments as well as businesses and local communities – we feel responsible to support the EU as much as possible in addressing societal challenges, creating opportunities for businesses and fostering economic growth. **We therefore call for the following considerations to be integrated into the future FP10 to ensure it addresses societal and economic challenges and leverages the expertise of key actors like the PEER Partnership:**

- 1. Green transitions are essential to address the economic and societal challenges faced by Europe. Implementing the Green Deal is indispensable if the EU is to live up to its stated ambitions to achieve transformative change.**
 - 1.1. FP10 needs to finance more research** into (i) understanding and driving fundamental change in society, economy, and the environment; (ii) addressing complex challenges such as climate change, social inequalities, as well as societal and technological transformations and support the transition towards sustainable and equitable systems. Engaging in a multi-actor approach together with policymakers, business, and civil society into collaborative research will enable profound and rapid change.
 - 1.2. FP10 must recognize that Human and Social Sciences are an integral part of the EU innovation and technological sovereignty.** The PEER Directors fully support the creation of the Societal Challenges Council as recommended by the Heitor report. Social cohesion and inclusion are more than ever needed to address global challenges in an increasingly polarized Europe. However, there must be a strong interrelation to the Competitiveness Council because competitiveness depends on how Europe addresses societal challenges.

¹ Due to its particular nature within the European Commission, JRC is not taking part of this FP10 position paper.

1.3. FP10 should foster closer cross-border environmental action through science by providing common knowledge to harmonise EU and Member States' legislation. In addition, FP10 must support collaboration with researchers beyond the European continent to drive multilateral action on critical issues and global crises, share knowledge and facilitate leadership to support common agendas.

2. Environmental collaborative research is critical for maintaining and enhancing EU competitiveness on a global scale.

2.1. FP10 should foster collaborative research on societal challenges to enhance economic and societal impact. FP10 should also put in place transdisciplinary, less prescriptive, and collaborative low Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) calls for tomorrow's solutions and technology. A bottom-up approach will maximise innovative potential of fundamental research and benefit the EU competitiveness. In parallel, applied research needs to be demonstrated and validated in living labs, leading to higher TRLs, so that solutions can be upscaled in the real world together with the private sector.

2.2. FP10 should enable European industry's involvement in the green transitions and implementation of the Green Deal by turning it into a business case for the benefit of industry, which has climate and biodiversity risks high on their agenda. Examples such as Nature-Based Solutions provide a shift towards a nature-positive economy², with great business opportunities in different sectors (e.g. blue-green infrastructures). Therefore, strong investment in research and technology is needed to address knowledge gaps and issues such as standards setting, measurement and valuation.

2.3. FP10 should increase investments and better coordinate scattered European environmental research infrastructures, embedding living lab methodologies approaches when appropriate, to allow ground-breaking research and cutting-edge innovations with large and small enterprises that will benefit the whole society.

3. To maximise the efficacy and impact of FP10, the budget and operating model must evolve in two ways:

3.1. FP10 should double the budget dedicated to environmental research in line with the Heitor's report requesting an increase in the budget for the next FP10 to 220 billion Euros.

3.2. FP10 must also adopt simplified and equitable financial rules that cater to the diverse business models of research institutions. The current overhead rate of 25% can be unsustainable for research institutions (including some PEER members) that do not have additional income streams, for example student fees, to engage at the European level.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by Europe urgently require collaborative action. The PEER Partnership is ready to contribute its expertise and resources to ensure FP10 becomes a catalyst for sustainability. We look forward to engaging in further dialogue about the development and implementation of the next Framework Programme.

² European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *The vital role of nature-based solutions in a nature positive economy*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/307761>

Signatories



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