CNS Decision on SP from page 83 onwards

Explanatory note from page 118 onwards

2025/0543 (COD)

Proposal for a

REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, for the period 2028-2034 laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/695

(Text with EEA relevance)

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 173(3), 182(1), 183, 188, second subparagraph and Article 322(1), point (a), thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee[1],

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions[2],

Having regard to the opinion of the Court of Auditors (1), Acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, Whereas:

(1) It is an objective of the Union to ***reinforce*** its scientific and technological bases by strengthening the European Research Area (ERA) in which researchers, ***innovators,*** scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely***, and by*** encouraging it to become more competitive, including in its industry, while promoting all research and innovation (R&I) activities to deliver on the Union's strategic priorities and commitments, which ultimately aim to promote peace, ***democracy,*** the Union's values and the well-being of its ***people***. ***In this context, the further development of the ERA should contribute to the effective implementation of the freedom of knowledge ("fifth freedom") towards a complete and efficient single market for R&I.***

(2) To deliver scientific, technological, economic, environmental and societal impact and to maximise the added value of the Union's R&I investments, the Union should invest in R&I through Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2028-2034 (the 'Programme'), which should strengthen ***scientific and*** technological leadership ***and excellence of the Union, contributing to its competitiveness, security, resilience and sovereignty, sustainability***, and social cohesion. ***The Programme should furthermore support the Union's competitiveness***

[1] OJ C […], […], p. […]. [2] OJ C […], […], p. […].

by promoting open and secure scientific cooperation that builds trusted and equitable partnerships, in line with the emerging European Framework for Science Diplomacy.

(2b) Academic freedom and the freedom of scientific research are fundamental values of the Union are enshrined in Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and remain essential to the integrity and future of the European Union R&I systems. Furthermore, the Russian aggression against democratic European nations should be a reminder that the authoritarian forces of the twentieth century are still present in Europe and that where the protection and promotion of fundamental values like academic freedom fails, the European project of democracy, freedom and human rights is threatened. Any weakening of academic freedom, whether through external pressures or internal erosion, undermines the foundations of democracy, open inquiry and evidence-based policymaking. In the context where academic freedom and the freedom of scientific research are increasingly challenged both within Europe and globally—through pressures on researchers, constraints on academic expression, and growing political and institutional interference— their protection through robust legal safeguards and promotion through institutional support in all countries benefiting from the Programme must be treated as a strategic priority for the implementation of the Programme.

(2c) The Programme should contribute to the protection and promotion of academic freedom, including through a European Scheme for the Support of Researchers at Risk that offers a sustainable response to recurring crisis-driven displacement and persecution of academic talent. Researchers at risk include researchers, scholars, scientists at all stages of their research careers, including doctoral candidates through to experienced researchers and professors, who are experiencing threats to their life, liberty, or research career, and those who are forced or have been forced to flee because of such threats. While some researchers at risk have recognised refugee status, asylum status, or similar protection status, a more significant proportion of those seeking assistance are outside the refugee process, seeking or holding temporary visas/work permits through visiting research/scholar positions at host universities in Europe or elsewhere, outside their home countries.

(3) The Programme ***is*** tightly connected ***to*** Regulation (EU) [XXX]* of the European Parliament and of the Council [European Competitiveness Fund][3] by placing ***R&I*** at the heart of the Union's economy and investment strategy. ***The European Competitiveness Fund will strengthen the Union's innovative capacity by providing support to the rollout of the most successful and needed outcomes of projects funded by the Programme, or its predecessors. This also requires that all procedures related to Work Programmes under this Regulation have to be set up under this Regulation exclusively, while joint meetings of programme committee configurations from the Programme and European Competitiveness Fund with related or overlapping topics should be convened by the Commission on a regular basis. These meetings should be based on substantive deliberations and documentation, enabling effective coordination, alignment of Work Programmes and, where appropriate, joint strategic planning.***

(4) ***Through this Programme t***he Union should furthermore aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote ***gender*** equality ***in R&D ,*** as well as to combat discrimination in accordance with Article 8 and Article 10 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. ***Gender balance should be required in advisory bodies, such as evaluation panels, expert groups, Councils and Boards.***

(4a) Science, technology and social structures are inherently interlinked, with their evolution being mutually shaped and interdependent. The development, diffusion and uptake of

technologies are significantly influenced by social factors and may lead to unintended transformations of societal structures. Addressing these dynamics requires the Programme to provide strong interdisciplinarity, in particular through the enhanced integration of social sciences and humanities throughout the R&I process, including from the earliest stages of technology development, and to dedicate sufficient resources and effort to it.

(5) In a rapidly changing economic, social and geopolitical environment, recent experience has shown the need for a more ***agile Programme***. To that effect, and in line with the objectives of the Programme, the funding ***allocation*** should ***be designed to be expertdriven and with shorter turnover than in previous Framework Programmes*** *(Rapp 3)* ***and should*** duly consider ***how science, R&I can best contribute to*** the evolving policy needs. ***This consideration should be based on the reality that investments in science, R&I – including investments in curiosity-driven research - now are the foundation for the Union's capacity to react to policy needs in the future.***

(6) The rules for the participation and dissemination of the Programme are designed to further simplify access, enhance openness, ***providing legal certainty*** and maximize the impact of Union funding. ***Those rules should facilitate the participation of newcomers and SMEs in order to foster the development of new ideas.***

(7) The Programme should contribute to increasing public and private investment in R&I in Member States, thereby helping to reach an overall investment target of at least 3% of the Union's gross domestic product (GDP) in research and development. Member States' investment in R&I should be assessed with the help of the framework for the coordination of economic, budgetary, employment and social policies within the Union – the European Semester process. Achieving that target would require Member States and the private sector to complement the Programme with their own reinforced investment actions in research, development and innovation. The Union has made steady progress in increasing research and development investments but is lagging behind other global leaders. The 3% target mentioned above, set over two decades ago acknowledged the importance of research and development as a foundation for a knowledge-based society. While the target encouraged various Member States to set their own research and development intensity goals, significant disparities remain as only a few Member States have reached or exceeded their investment ambition. ***Considering that, according to past statistics, the Framework Programme represents only 7% of public spending in R&I in the Union, the Programme should be implemented in a way that delivers mutually reinforcing synergies and is close coordination with other relevant national programmes, as well as with relevant EU instruments, notably the European Competitiveness Fund, the Innovation Fund and the National and Regional Partnership Plans adopted by Member States in accordance with Regulation (EU) …/… of the European Parliament and of the Council[+] and the Innovation Fund established by Article 10a(8) of Directive 2003/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council[2].***

(7a) The governance of the Programme's collaborative R&I activities should be guided by the principle that public research funding contributes to scientific excellence, societal impact and economic competitiveness. To that end, governance should be underpinned by a High-Level Council for collaborative research and innovation (High Level Council) composed of high-level prominent experts from

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[2] ***Directive 2003/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 October 2003 establishing a system for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Union and amending Council Directive 96/61/EC (OJ L 275, 25.10.2003, p. 32 ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2003/87/2024-0301).***

[+] *OJ: Please insert in the text the number of the Directive contained in document PE-CONS …/… (2025/0240(COD)) and insert the number, date, title and OJ reference of that Regulation in the footnote.*

science, innovation, industry and civil society, drawn from across a broad range of scientific disciplines and sectors, including the social sciences, the humanities and the arts, who are internationally respected in their respective fields. Those activities should be implemented by Lead Experts, supported by expert teams, responsible for developing and monitoring the calls for proposals – including consulting the research community, the definition of call topics, and the management of selected projects throughout their lifecycle - in order to benefit from the most suitable expertise from the appropriate fields. To ensure the depth of commitment and continuity of expertise required to design high-quality calls and to allow meaningful engagement with the broader R&I ecosystem to inform the call topic formulation, the Commission should recruit Lead Experts on a temporary and fulltime basis. Rather than being bound by a fixed Work Programme cycle, expert teams should be able to propose call topics to the Commission for adoption on an ad hoc basis. In doing so, the Lead Expert should propose the budget available for a call topic, the type of action - whether a research action, a R&I action or an innovation action - and the period during which the call topic remains open, which should be sufficient to allow applicants to form a consortium.

(7b) This approach reflects the recommendation from the 2024 report entitled 'The future of European competitiveness' (the "Draghi report") to leave the management of the Programme to people with a proven track record at the frontier of innovation and is in line with the recommendation from the Report of Commission Expert Group on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe of 6 December 2024 (the 'Heitor report') to establish dedicated Councils to guide collaborative R&I. The interplay between the Commission, including its empowered expert teams, the High-Level Council and the Programme Committees create a system that allows public authorities to retain full control over funding allocation while enabling experts to deliver a frontier and agile Programme which delivers scientific knowledge and innovation to the benefit of the European society and economy. Proximity between those responsible for designing calls, applying for the calls and those evaluating the proposals submitted under them can create a structural risk of conflict of interest that must be addressed through robust procedural safeguards. Where needed to secure the fairness of the evaluation procedure, the evaluation of proposals can be carried out on a blind basis, ensuring that evaluators do not have access to the identity of applicants or their institutional affiliations during the evaluation.

(7c) The High-Level Council should provide independent advisory input and strategic analysis to the Commission. This will support the strategic development of the Programme and the pursuit of its objectives by strengthening the Commission's decisions relating to the implementation of the Programme, including the preparation and adoption of Work Programmes and calls for proposals.

(7d) The general thematic priorities and calls, including the budget available to each of the priorities and calls, should be set out in the Work Programmes adopted by the Commission by means of delegated acts covering a period of three years, where each first year coincides with the last year of the previous Work Programme. The Work Programmes should set out the strategic priorities covering the entire scope of Pillar II to ensure that the activities under the Lead Experts and under Partnerships are

implemented in a coherent and coordinated manner. Furthermore, the Work Programme should, where necessary, set the specific eligibility conditions, for example with regards to research security, that may be applied to call topics.

(7e) In course of elaborating calls for proposals for collaborative R&I activities, expert teams should consult broadly and regularly the relevant ecosystem, in an inclusive and transparent manner, involving a ***wide range of expertise from the R&I community. This will include consultation with existing expert-driven advisory bodies, including the European Technology Platforms and the stakeholder bodies under the SET Plan. Such consultation should ensure that scientific excellence, long-term research priorities and societal challenges are given balanced consideration. Furthermore, the consultation process should reflect the diversity of the community and avoid any single perspective from dominating the process. In particular, Lead Experts with support of the expert team should proactively engage with relevant actors from industry, academia, civil society and the investment community in order to gather strategic intelligence on emerging needs, technological developments and market dynamics, so that calls reflect real-world opportunities and challenges. Furthermore, expert teams should accompany the projects selected under the calls for which they are responsible throughout the project lifecycle, providing support, facilitating access to relevant networks and fostering connections between projects where there is common interest or where closer coordination would generate added value for the Union. This role should, in particular, facilitate synergies with other instruments, including Union programmes such as the European Competitiveness Fund, and contribute to enabling the valorisation and exploitation of results from the Programme.***

(7f) Given the centrality of involvement of the Lead Expert in the preparation and monitoring of the calls, their subsequent occupational activity could carry a significant risk of conflict of interest, for example by giving their employer, specific applicants or themselves a competitive advantage in calls in which a particular Lead Expert participated in the preparation of a call. The Staff Regulation of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union, laid down in Council Regulation (EEC, Euratom, ECSC) No 259/68[3] (the 'Staff Regulation') provides for safeguards to prevent any post-public employment conflicts of interests, in particular under Article 16 and 17. In the context of this Programme, the meaning of Article 16 has to be understood as including potential limitations on positions accepted by the Lead Experts after they leave the Commission's service, specifically related to the nature of a project-based public funding programme.

(8) As in Horizon Europe, the OECD definitions regarding technological readiness levels (TRLs) should continue to be taken into account in the classification of technological research, product development and demonstration activities, and in the definition of types of action available in calls for proposals. Grants should not be awarded for actions where activities go above TRL 8. It should be possible for the Work Programme to allow

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[3] ***Regulation (EEC, Euratom, ECSC) No 259/68 of the Council of 29 February 1968 laying down the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities and instituting special measures temporarily applicable to officials of the Commission (OJ L 56, 4.3.1968, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/1968/259(1)/oj).***

grants for large-scale product validation and market replication for a given call under the part 'Competitiveness and Society'.

(9) ***I***t should be possible to implement parts of the budget ***of Pillar II of the Programme*** through ***a limited number of*** European Partnerships together with other public and private entities, where ***there is sufficient Union added value demonstrated by a willingness to invest, preferably by both the Union and Member States, dedicated contractual arrangements should be set up - including those under Articles 185 and 187 TFEU. Partnerships and activities developed under the Lead Experts should be implemented in a coherent and coordinated manner. It should be possible to allocate a significant budget to those Partnerships, in order to create a critical mass across the Union to achieve its objectives, and they should have sufficient operational autonomy to pursue the objectives in a fast-changing world. The scale of a Partnership should be achieved by providing substantial funding, commensurate to larger Partnerships of each type of Partnership under Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council[4], to a clearly defined sectoral, thematic or technology area, including where appropriate cross-Window areas. The scale and clearly defined area of intervention should provide for*** effective ***prioritisation. Where appropriate, Partnerships could implement budgets from other Union programmes. In particular, they could be used where priorities of the European Competitiveness Fund require the*** implementation ***of a joint research and deployment agenda for a particular ecosystem which requires funding from both the Programme and the*** European ***Competitiveness Fund. Their use to implement parts*** of the European ***Competitiveness Fund should be justified, for example by the structure of the global market, and the budget from the Programme should be used exclusively to support R&I activities under a Partnership. Decisions on the creation of*** Partnerships***, including those under Articles 185 and 187 TFEU, should take place on case-by-case basis and in the context of the relevant policy procedures, including legislative procedures, taking into consideration already established and well-functioning partnerships.***

(9a) A multi-actor approach, including by involving end-users in the research projects, can be a key element to ensure that projects deliver results that can be implemented by the end-users. This is particularly relevant in agricultural and civil security research. Furthermore, the involvement of vocational education and training institutions can facilitate the translation of research outcomes into practical applications, support skills development aligned with results' needs, and enhance the diffusion and uptake of innovative solutions across sectors and regions.

(9b) The Programme should include a dedicated instrument to foster excellent innovation through small-scale, bottom-up collaborative activities. Standard collaborative innovation activities under its Competitiveness and Society Pillar, by virtue of their scale and the competitiveness of their selection, create an entry barrier that can deter undertakings, researchers and innovators from initiating new, exploratory or higherrisk forms of industrial collaboration. A fast-track instrument combining limited budget ceilings, short project durations and a short time-to-grant removes this entry barrier, allowing companies, researchers and innovators across the Union to act swiftly on emerging opportunities and to form new collaborative partnerships across borders, disciplines and sectors. By making collaborative innovation more accessible to companies participating for the first time, such an instrument widens industrial participation in transnational innovation activities, strengthens the openness of

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[4] ***Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj).***

European innovation ecosystems, and generates conditions for more creative and unexpected forms of cross-sector cooperation.

(11) Missions as set up in the Regulation 2021/695 should ***deliver concrete solutions to major societal challenges through clearly defined objectives, measurable targets and strong impact for citizens and be pursued by the Programme to*** enable a transformative and systemic impact for society, by fostering cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral, crosspolicy and cross-border collaboration. They should rely on R&I to develop the breakthrough technologies, services, products, and social innovations needed to achieve their ambitious objectives. In turn, Missions should accelerate the development, scaling, and deployment of innovative solutions and help create lead markets for new products and services. The ***five Missions - namely the Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change, which supports societies in adapting to the unavoidable impacts of climate change; the Mission on Cancer, which aims to improve the lives of more than 3 million people affected by cancer by 2030 through prevention, treatment and quality of life; the Mission on Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Waters, which works to restore our ocean and water ecosystems by 2030; the Mission on 100 ClimateNeutral and Smart Cities, which supports 100 European cities in their systemic transformation towards climate neutrality by 2030; and the Mission on a Soil Deal for Europe, which aims to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030 for food, people, nature and climate — have all demonstrated their capacity to mobilise citizens and stakeholders around concrete and measurable societal objectives. The*** Framework Programme should ***dedicate part of its budget to*** the R&I activities of the Missions, ***while the*** deployment and scaling up should be delivered through other EU programmes ***such as the ECF, as well as*** national funding ***and private investment.***

(11a) The Windows under Pillar II of the Programme should partly be implemented through mission-oriented European moonshots. Moonshots are long-term R&I activities which aim to achieve a clear objective and which foster a structural stakeholder and/or citizen involvement in the strategic steering of the activity. The objective of the moonshot should be defined in accordance with the SMARTmethodology and should contribute to the achievement of the policy objectives of the Union, like the digital decade objectives, the climate neutrality objectives, or competitiveness objectives. It should be rooted in R&I but should lead to impact beyond the outcomes of R&I activities. A moonshot can therefore only be established with the commitment across Commission services and with support of Member States. A key aspect of this mission-oriented approach will be that it is based on calls for proposals for bottom-up projects that contribute to achieving the objective. The intention of this bottom-up approach is to ensure that European moonshots are, at their start, without prejudice to the way in which the objective is achieved and are inviting creativity as well as contributions from unexpected places. After a portfolio of bottom-up projects has been established, more specific calls can be used to build a pathway to achieving the objective based on the most promising bottom-up projects. Considering the need of expertise to successfully guide such a moonshot, it will be implemented through the expert-led approach. Candidate topics for moonshots are women's health, the human exposome and the quantum internet. A moonshot on women's health is appropriate because there are clearly identified gaps in medical knowledge caused by a bias in research on the male body and medical issues predominantly suffered by men. Addressing specific, identified gaps with an ambitious timeframe and with the engagement of female patients holds high potential to drastically accelerate addressing these gender inequalities. A moonshot on the human exposome is appropriate because fully mapping the exposome will require a long-term commitment to following and

researching a cohort of 10 million European citizens. A moonshot to make Europe the first continent with a functional quantum internet prototype is appropriate because the science is there but to overcome the European paradox this technology now needs a coordinated commitment across the Union to move from research to reality.

(12) Anchored in the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027[4], the New European Bauhaus (NEB) Facility is a multi-annual funding tool designed to accelerate the transformation of neighbourhoods through sustainable***, innovative, creative*** and inclusive design***, including energy efficiency and decarbonisation of buildings, as well as blending environmental, social and cultural dimensions***. Its R&I component should be funded by Horizon Europe while its roll-out component should be delivered through other EU programmes and national funding.

(12a) Considering that the cultural and creative industries and sectors are not only one of the biggest economic sectors of the Union, but also carriers of our shared European identity and rich cultural heritage, the Programme should contribute to the preservation, development and innovation of these industries and sectors. In particular, support under this Programme should include at least €300 million for the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage and support for R&I activities to support the development of pan-European platforms using multilingual AI technologies to make available real time news and information from professional media outlets across the EU to wider audience.

(13) The European Research Council (ERC) should provide attractive and flexible funding, thereby enabling talented and creative individual researchers—***including*** nurturing early-***career*** researchers—to pursue the most promising avenues at the frontier of science ***across all fields***. This commitment to ***bottom-up*** investigator-driven research, selected through Union-wide competition based solely on the criterion of excellence and open to talent regardless of nationality or origin, is fundamental to attracting the world's brightest minds and further ***strengthening*** Europe as a world-leading centre for R&I.

(14) In a knowledge-based global economy, the Union's long-term competitiveness, ***scientific and*** technological leadership and capacity to address ***European and*** global challenges should depend notably on its ability to develop, attract and retain a highly skilled and internationally connected research workforce ***throughout the Union and beyond***. Strategic investment in excellent researchers, in their training, mobility and career prospects, within and outside academia, is essential to ***foster scientific R&I breakthroughs, which lead to*** innovation, economic, ***societal and environmental*** resilience and societal well-being. In line with the principles of the European Charter for researchers, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) are instrumental in advancing this objective. The Programme should reinforce links between ***research performing organisations,*** universities, ***other higher education and training institutions,*** and innovation ecosystems, including the private sector ***as well as connecting local and regional ecosystems***. It should ***contribute to*** the completion of the European Research Area, ***and the development of synergies with the European Education Area, in its higher education dimension***, including ***through the European Universities Alliances and Erasmus+. This should support the*** development of European higher education sector capacity to compete with global counterparts through collaboration, nurturing and attracting talent and leveraging more private investments.

(14a) The Programme should include a dedicated instrument to promote scientific excellence through small-scale, bottom-up collaborative research – Fast Track to Excellence. Standard collaborative instruments, by virtue of their scale and the competitiveness of their selection, create an entry barrier that can deter researchers from initiating new, exploratory or higher-risk forms of cooperation. A fast-track instrument combining limited budget ceilings, short project durations and a short time-to-grant removes this

entry barrier, allowing researchers across the Union to act swiftly on emerging scientific ideas and to form new collaborative networks across borders, and where appropriate facilitate multidisciplinarity. disciplines and sectors. By making research cooperation more accessible, such an instrument broadens participation in transnational science, contributes to a more open and dynamic European Research Area, and generates conditions for creative and unexpected scientific partnerships. For the effective evaluation of proposals under a bottom-up call, the instrument will build on the experience and leadership of the ERC by using the same topical structure for its evaluation panels of independent external experts.

(15) The European Innovation Council (EIC) should stimulate deep tech market-creating innovation. It should identify, develop ***breakthrough and disruptive innovation,*** and deploy these deep tech innovations through its instruments. Through coherent and streamlined support, the EIC should fill the vacuum in public support and private investment for breakthrough technologies and deep tech ***disruptive*** innovation ***with strong support to the early stages of the innovation journey where private investment cannot step in sufficiently through the Pathfinder, while the Accelerator will support market entry and scaling up. The EIC Transition will foster the transition from science and research to innovation-driven economic activity.*** The EIC should aim to bridge, integrate and accelerate through its instruments the innovator's journey from research to market***, by strengthening the links between the ERC and EIC,*** and enable the Union to have leading companies in emerging areas of technology to meet its social and economic objectives and avoid dependencies on other regions ***of the world, including technological dependencies***. ***Particular attention should be paid to supporting women-led and youth-led disruptive and deep-tech startups and facilitating their access to finance and mentoring***. ***The lessons learnt from the dedicated support for women innovators and women-led companies on how EIC support can be more inclusive for women will be taken up and further developed in all parts of the EIC.*** The EIC should support high risk, high-potential innovations and companies presenting such technological, scientific, financial, management or market risks that they are not yet considered to be fully bankable and therefore cannot raise the necessary level of investments to be globally competitive from the market. This should incorporate both an 'open' (bottom-up) and a 'challenge' driven approach, in close coordination and synergy with the European Competitiveness Fund and its policy windows. It should include a***n*** 'ARPA'-like approach ***implemented by Programme Managers, where high-risk projects are supported, or discontinued, in stages and allow for innovative procurement. The Programme Managers should be empowered to take risks, pro-actively shape their portfolio and engage with relevant actors outside the Programme. Furthermore, they should actively scout and identify results from any component of the Programme that may deserve to be further exploited and valorised in other Union instruments, in particular by the European Competitiveness Fund, including under the Specific Programme for defence research for the achievement of its specific objectives. In order to fulfil this role, EIC Programme Managers should have a senior position within the organisational structure of the Commission that ensures their freedom and autonomy of operation.***

(16) Deep-tech scale-up financing under the Scaleup Europe Fund announced in the Startup Scaleup Strategy, existing at the time of the entry into force of the present Regulation, should ***continue to provide*** scaleup financing under the MFF 2028-2034 ***as part of the European Innovation Council***. ***The Scaleup Europe Fund and scale-up support under the ECF should be complementary to each other.***

(17) The Joint Research Centre ('JRC') should continue to provide independent scientific evidence and technical support for Union policies throughout the whole policy cycle.

Where appropriate, the JRC should be involved at the inception stage of new policies and provide contributions for science-based policies. The direct actions of the JRC should be implemented in a flexible, efficient, and transparent manner, taking into account the needs of Union policies and the relevant needs of the users of the JRC and ensuring the protection of the Union's financial interests. The JRC should continue to generate additional resources, which it may use to support its scientific and technical activities.

(18) The Programme should ensure the effective promotion and protection of values and principles of the European Research Area and the Pact for Research and Innovation[5], notably ethics and integrity in R&I, freedom of scientific research, science for policy, gender equality and equal opportunities, non-discrimination, open science and the promotion of attractive research careers and mobility. In particular, the Programme should ensure the effective promotion of equal opportunities for all and the implementation of gender mainstreaming, including the integration of the gender dimension in R&I content. It should aim to address the causes of gender imbalance.

(19) The Programme should support European research infrastructures and technology infrastructures in driving scientific and technological excellence and industrial competitiveness, by supporting the continuum of the R&I cycle from basic to applied research towards societal and market deployment***, ensuring balanced and inclusive performance of the R&T infrastructures and its broader cooperation with partners from business and academia. This should be contributing to the strategic needs of the Union and providing European added value through coherent long-term planning and coordinated investments with Member States. The work of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) and any further strategic forum for technology infrastructures shall be duly taken into account.***

(20) ***The Programme should contribute to reducing national disparities within the Union in R&I capacity and skills in order to strengthen the European Research Area and ensure the full mobilisation of Europe's talent and knowledge base. Achieving this objective requires a partnership approach, in which Union-level support is complemented by sustained national R&D investment and structural reforms to strengthen research ecosystems at national level, in particular in Member States where such efforts can yield the greatest impact for addressing the innovation gap in Europe.*** The Programme should implement concrete measures in support of capacity building in widening countries and ***in support of strengthening coordination excellence in Transition Countries, while*** strengthening collaborative links across the Union enhancing the ***scientific,*** R&I ***leadership*** in widening and transition countries, leading to a more cohesive and integrated European ***Research Area*** and contributing to the target to invest at least 3% of GDP in research and development. ***The Programme should implement a variety of measures that ensure coordinators from widening and transition countries across the Horizon Europe programme and support collaboration between less and more innovative ecosystems to tackle fragmentation and to tap into capacities across territorial innovation ecosystems.*** The eligible Member States from the 2021-2027 period should be divided into two groups for the whole duration of the Programme, on the basis of ***their position in the European Research Area. Member States whose R&I ecosystems are more mature and better integrated in the European Research Area will be considered*** Transition Countries***, while*** other Member States

[5] Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/2122 of 26 November 2021 on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe, OJ L 431, 2.12.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2021/2122/oj.

remain Widening Countries. This differentiated approach reflects the Programme's ambition to support all Member States in progressively building the foundations for strong R&I performance and enhancing participation in the European Research Area, with the expectation that dedicated support measures evolve in line with the progress achieved over successive Framework Programmes. In order to foster this progress Widening Countries will have to annually increase their public R&D spending as of 2030 in order to be able to benefit from capacity building measures. To ensure that this conditionality remains fair and proportionate, the Commission should be able to grant a temporary exemption where exceptional macroeconomic or budgetary circumstances materially affect a Widening Country's capacity to increase public investment in research and development. The Commission's assessment should be based on objective and comparable evidence, including evidence from the relevant Union-level economic surveillance and fiscal monitoring processes, in particular the European Semester. Any exemption should remain temporary, justified and subject to regular review, so as not to undermine the objective of increasing national public investment in research and development.

(20a) The Programme should be implemented in synergy with the Euratom Research and Training Programme.

(21) Acknowledging ***that*** international cooperation ***contributes to maintaining scientific and innovation excellence, fostering competitiveness through economic cooperation with international partners as well as*** addressing, among others, shared technological, economic, ***security,*** environmental and societal concerns, the Programme, should promote cooperation with third countries. International cooperation should aim to strengthen the Union's competitiveness and excellence in R&I, including its capacity to attract and retain the best talents worldwide. Geo-political considerations including economic security should be at the centre of the approach and varying degrees of cooperation should be considered based on an overall assessment of the benefit that could be derived by the Union towards addressing its priorities and global challenges while safeguarding the Union's values and interests. ***The Union should endeavour to keep the Programme as open as possible to third country participation, including through targeted actions with low- and middle-income countries, based on mutual benefit, and in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Global Health Strategy, and contribute to the delivery of global public good*** *(SD 365)****, but as closed as necessary to preserve the integrity of the values upon which it is built and to protect against research security risks, including the misappropriation of knowledge, the transfer of sensitive technologies and foreign interference in the Union's R&I ecosystem.*** *(GR 361)* ***In particular, the security and defence interests of the Union and its Member States, including the principle of good neighbourly relations, as established in the framework of the CFSP pursuant to Title V of the TEU have to be respected in this context.***

(21a) Association to all or parts of the Programme should remain the most comprehensive form of cooperation. ***Decisions on the scope of association of a third country to the Programme are inherently of a highly political nature close to core questions of the Union's industrial competitiveness, strategic autonomy, security and defence interests, as well as economic security. For that reason, the risk-benefit analysis underpinning the scope of association of each third country should be substantive, country-specific and evidence-based, should include evidence on the state of academic freedom in the third country concerned, and should be shared with the European Parliament and the Council before any formal exchanges with that third country take place, so as to allow the co-legislators to exercise meaningful political scrutiny at a stage when their views can still inform the Union's negotiating position. Where the protection and promotion***

of academic freedom in a third country does not meet European standards, association to the Programme should only be possible on the condition that the third country concerned commits to concrete measures to improve academic freedom. That condition should apply to all categories of associated countries, including European Economic Area members, acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidate countries. In accordance with the Agreement on the European Economic Area, and in particular Article 81(a) thereof, the EEA EFTA countries should have access to all parts of the Programme on an equal footing with EU Member States. The Programme may support activities financed by the Global Europe programme provided they comply with the rules and objectives of this Regulation in line with the provisions on synergies.

(21b) In an increasingly complex and contested geopolitical environment, where science, technology and innovation have become key drivers of economic competitiveness, security and global influence and where there are growing pressures on academic freedom and the freedom of scientific research, the Union should strengthen its role in science diplomacy as an integral component of its external action and R&I policy. *(RE 369)* ***The Framework Programme is one of the Union's most significant instruments for science diplomacy, projecting the Union's values, scientific excellence while strengthening its capacity to convene and build partnerships globally. Through its association policy, international participation provisions, and initiatives such as the "Choose Europe for Science campaign [and European support for Researchers at Risk], the Framework Programme strengthens the Union's competitive position as a leading global science and technology actor, fosters dialogue and trust-building with partner countries, and supports the pursuit of peace and a rules-based international order. At the same time, effective science diplomacy reinforces the Framework Programme itself by attracting the world's best researchers and innovators, thereby sustaining the scientific excellence on which the Programme's impact depends. In a context of intensifying international competition for talent, the Framework Programme should support the Union's capacity to attract, retain and nurture the world's best researchers, innovators and highly skilled professionals. Promoting talent mobility, offering excellent career opportunities and ensuring an open, dynamic and academically free research environment should be recognised as essential elements for strengthening the Union's scientific excellence, technological leadership and long-term competitiveness. In this regard, the Framework Programme should also contribute to the Union's position as a global safe haven for the freedom of scientific research and to safeguarding the global circulation of knowledge , including ensuring that scientific data remains available for international scientific collaboration. The Framework Programme should be implemented in a manner consistent with the European Framework for Science Diplomacy, while ensuring that the necessary safeguards to ensure economic and research security are maintained.***

(22) To reinforce the Union's strategic autonomy and ensure long-term sustainable economic growth, it is essential to bolster its global competitiveness while ***preserving the exclusively civilian nature of the Programme and*** safeguarding the Union's strategic assets and interests as outlined in the European Economic Security Strategy[6]. ***Research and innovation play a central role in achieving these objectives***. Article 136 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 as complemented by Article ***22b*** of ***this*** Regulation promote the competitiveness of the Union and protect its economic security. The ***delegated act on the*** application of these provisions for the purpose***s*** of the Programme should provide an appropriate legal framework to allow, where necessary, for the establishment of specific conditions regarding award procedures that promote ***research- and excellence-driven*** competitiveness and protect ***research security and*** the interests and strategic autonomy of the Union, including measures aimed at restricting

participation or protecting results ***[..].*** Where necessary, a risk-based approach should be applied to ensure that risks related to R&I are identified, assessed, and addressed through proportionate and effective measures[7]. In accordance with Article 136 of the Financial Regulation, ***participation*** restrictions should apply to high-risk suppliers, for security reasons. ***In order to ensure that these interventions do not lead to unnecessary uncertainty for the Union's international partners, a clear framework for the decision-making on the application of these interventions should be adopted by the Commission. This should include considerations regarding the impact of excluding associated countries from certain activities may have on the performance of the Programme in general, including for example on the international activities of European research organisations and companies as well as contributions of companies from third countries to the competitiveness of the European economy.*** *(EPP 379)* ***In order to provide greater predictability for a specific group of associated countries, the Commission could designate an associated country as a trusted partner. Such designation should reflect the country's long-standing and mutually beneficial participation in the Programme, its close alignment with the Union in international relations and its commitment to shared values. For the purposes of this Regulation, trusted partners should be treated as Member States with regard to any restrictions on participation in the Programme or the exploitation of its results adopted for reasons including, but not limited to, research security, economic security, global security and European competitiveness. Accordingly, entities established in trusted partner countries should not be excluded from participation in specific calls unless the Union can demonstrate that their participation would have a direct and negative effect on the Union's fundamental values, core interests or competitiveness. The designation of a trusted partner should also reflect that the associated country has in place all the necessary safeguards, including democratic institutions, effective IP protection and high quality security services that cooperate closely with their counterparts in the Union, to ensure that results stemming from this Programme are not exploited in a manner that is contrary to the Union's interests.***

(22a) The Programme is built on open science, academic freedom and international collaboration. Restrictions on participation should be limited to cases where a demonstrable and specific risk to the research security interests of the Union has been identified through a proportionate, risk-based assessment. In particular, restrictions should primarily be considered for critical knowledge and technologies.

(22b) The Programme recognises the importance of standardisation activities for ensuring that European companies can effectively capitalise on the competitive advantage from R&I. Considering the central role of standardisation in driving innovation, enhancing competitiveness, and ensuring impactful, market-ready solutions, the Programme will reimburse costs associated with standardisation activities, promote participants to take part in European and international standardisation activities, as well as offer technical support to researchers in their standardisation activities.

(23) In light of increasing risks linked to natural hazards, health emergencies, technological accidents, evolving security threats, ***hybrid attacks*** and other disruptions, it is essential to enhance the Union's and Member States' capability to ***understand,*** anticipate, prepare for, and respond to crises and disasters. The Programme should support research that strengthen disaster risk and crisis management, invest in climate resilience, ***contribute to reducing critical dependencies,*** and enhance the resilience of vital societal functions ***and across civil sectors exposed to security risks through i.a. protections of critical infrastructure***, and build a more resilient, secure, and prepared Union, in line with the objectives of the EU Preparedness Union Strategy.

(23a) Given the increasing risks related to cyber threats, foreign interference, including foreign information manipulation and interference, and espionage, the Programme should ensure that research outcomes, intellectual property and sensitive data are appropriately protected throughout the R&I lifecycle. This should include fostering a culture of security awareness among researchers, strengthening the resilience of research and technology infrastructures, and promoting cooperation among relevant stakeholders to identify, assess and mitigate emerging risks. Research security should be integrated as a cross-cutting priority of the Programme, with a view to safeguarding the integrity, confidentiality, and resilience of R&I activities and their results, while preserving openness and international cooperation.

(24) Activities should reflect the importance of tackling the dramatic loss of biodiversity and contribute to the preservation and restoration of nature, ecosystems and their services. The integration of environmental ***and climate*** science in activities***, where feasible and appropriate, is important*** to avoid damage to the environment, to maintain clean environment and to restore heathy ecosystems.

(25) The Programme acknowledges climate change as one of the biggest global and societal challenge ***which creates an existential threat for humankind*** and climate action as ***an enabler*** for industrial competitiveness ***insofar as it reduces the cost of doing business in Europe as well as improves the security of supply of energy and raw materials***. *(Rapp 14)* Activities should reflect the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement***, alongside other societal challenges such as the loss of biodiversity***. ***Therefore, the Framework Programme should respond to the needs of the European industry and society.***

(26) Simplification in the Programme's implementation is essential to ensure its accessibility and efficiency and ***should be designed with a view to*** reducing the administrative burden for beneficiaries ***related to the application for and management of projects.*** and minimising the risk of errors. ***Lump sum-based funding has proven to simplify participation for some beneficiaries while complexities remain for others. Further development of this system, and of the use of other simplified cost options, to ensure it leads to genuine simplification for beneficiaries will be required, allowing beneficiaries to select those that best align with their internal management practices. The Model Grant Agreement as well as the Annotated Model Grant Agreement, in which the Commission specifies its detailed interpretation of the rules for participation set out in this Regulation, are two documents that provide essential information to applicants and which should therefore be available from the start of the Programme. While simplified cost options, including lump sum funding, contribute to reducing administrative burden and error rates, it is essential that the methodologies used to determine such amounts are based on robust cost plausibility assessments and benchmarking against comparable actions, and are periodically reviewed to ensure sound financial management and value for money. The shift to simplified cost options or any other simplified form of financing provided for by this Regulation shall guarantee transparency and auditability, and shall preserve the rights of OLAF and the EPPO to conduct investigations within their mandate, and of the European Court of Auditors to carry out audits, effectively. Equal treatment shall likewise be ensured. Advancing efforts over the previous Framework Programmes to streamline funding rules and minimise errors, the reimbursement of personnel costs should also be further simplified by proposing the use of personnel unit costs, which reduces complexity for participants and facilitates reporting. Simplification measures should be implemented in a proportionate and risk-based manner, based on a documented risk assessment, ensuring accessibility while safeguarding the Union's financial interests through appropriate safeguards, including audit and control***

arrangements, as well as methodologies for determining payment amounts and mechanisms to prevent systematic overcompensation. Ultimately efficiency gains from simplification measures should lead to demonstrable savings in the Programme's administrative budget. The Commission should therefore report annually to the discharge authority on the performance of these measures, including on administrative cost savings.

(26a) The Programme should be implemented in full respect of the Union's framework for the protection of the Union budget, including Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council[6].. The Commission should ensure appropriate transparency and reporting to the European Parliament and the Council on measures affecting Programme spending adopted under that framework. In particular, the Commission should ensure that the control framework enables full traceability of operations and recipients and that data necessary for checks, audits and investigations are complete, reliable and made available through the single electronic data interchange area and the single gateway referred to in Article 12 Regulation (EU) …/… of the European Parliament and of the Council[+] [Performance Framework Regulation].

(26b) The pace of scientific and technological development is such that R&I actions may need to be adapted during their implementation in order to remain at the frontier of knowledge and to maximise their impact. Such adaptations, including modifications to the Description of the Action or to the consortium of beneficiaries, may constitute a necessary scientific response to new discoveries, emerging technologies or unforeseen opportunities, rather than a deviation from the original award. It would be contrary to the objectives of this Regulation to treat such adaptations as grounds for challenging the grant award decision or the principle of equal treatment of applicants. Any request for such an amendment could be subject to review by external experts, and where appropriate the Lead Expert and their expert teams responsible for the scientific oversight of an action and the EIC Programme Managers, whose proximity to the action places them in the best position to assess whether a proposed amendment genuinely reflects scientific or technological progress.

(26c) Excellence is the guiding principle for the implementation of this Programme and therefore there is a need for constant improvement of its delivery. Evaluations of previous Framework Programmes and independent policy advice have highlighted that new approaches can increase the effectiveness of Union support for R&I, and have called for the Programme to be able to test these new approaches more rapidly, including for disruptive, high-risk research. The Programme should therefore be able to test, on a limited and evidence-based scale, alternative approaches to the award and implementation of Union support, with the aim of accelerating European R&I, improving outcomes and creating more impact for Europe, including by building the experimentation capacity of the European Commission. Where a derogation from Union law is required for effective testing, this derogation should be clearly defined with a direct link to the objective of the testing. The derogations cannot be used to deviate from social, environmental or governance standards set in Union law, and should exclusively focus on derogations from acts related to the implementation of

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[6] ***Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2092 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2020 on a general regime of conditionality for the protection of the Union budget (OJ L 433I, 22.12.2020, pp. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2020/2092/oj).***

[+] OJ: Please insert in the text the number of the Regulation contained in document PE-CONS 78/13 (2025/0545(COD)) and insert the number, date, title and OJ reference of that Regulation in the footnote.

the Union budget. Given the specialised nature of such experimentation, the Commission, including the ERC and EIC – should they autonomously decide to test new approaches - should foster internal expertise and capacity for experimentation and the roll out of new approaches, including state-of-the-art AI tools dedicated to supporting the evaluation of the growing number of applications. Where needed, the Commission should be able to draw on external experts, including from academia and from national or regional authorities, to support and validate it. Approaches proven effective should be capable of being rolled out more broadly. Any experimentation should be set out in the Work Programme to ensure Member State oversight and the auditability for the Court of Auditors.

(27) To accommodate specific organisational set-up, especially encountered in the Research and Innovation activities, it should be possible to declare as eligible costs in-kind contributions from third parties. To incentivise valorisation of results, it should be clarified that this should not be counted as revenues of the action.

(28) In view of strengthening the Union's competitiveness and maximising the uptake and deployment of the results in general, beneficiaries owning results should manage their results in accordance with their obligations established under this Regulation regarding valorisation and dissemination. Those obligations may be adjusted in the call conditions where appropriate based on policy considerations, including related to economic security, but should encompass requirements to protect, give access, valorise results and make them public as appropriate and justified, including through open science practices. To facilitate and accelerate the valorisation process, support instruments and tools should be put in place ***by the Commission [...]*** and any such support and services provided for in its Chapter III ***of the European Competitiveness Fund should be accessible for beneficiaries of this Programme***.

(29) Support measures are needed to strengthen and better connect innovation ecosystems. Such measures should support organisations and innovators to create competitive, robust and connected innovation ecosystems***, boost new R&I collaborations and expand existing ones across the Union,*** and improve framework conditions through cooperation and knowledge exchange. They should help connect national, regional, and local ecosystems by removing barriers in the single market ***as well as foster the valorisation and uptake of R&I results and help overcome*** market fragmentation, limited capital access and segmented national capital markets, slow innovation uptake and the underutilisation of innovation procurement. ***Tools such as Regional Innovation Valleys (RIVs) and the Seal of Excellence should be available under this Programme, together with relevant other initiatives under other Union Programmes such as Digital Innovation Hubs (DiHs/EDiHs), Interreg and Smart Specialisation Strategies, as these kinds of activities promote networking among innovation ecosystems.***

(29a) The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) established by Regulation (EU) 2021/819 of the European Parliament and of the Council[7] has brought forward several generations of Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), leveraging the strength of collaboration in the knowledge triangle. This Programme will continue to support the work of the KICs as well as the efforts by the EIT to support KICs by sharing best practices, supporting the administration of public funds and creating cross-KIC added value. While KICs are public-private

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[7] ***Regulation (EU) 2021/819 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (OJ L 189, p. 61, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/819/oj).***

cooperations, they should not be considered European Partnerships in the meaning of Article 11 of this Regulation.

(29b) Place-based innovation aims to drive economic growth, improve quality of life, and contribute to sustainable development at regional and local level, and therefore must also be supported. New industrial and technological capabilities, which are key to Europe's competitiveness, are territorially embedded, and one of Europe's strengths is the coordination of its diverse regional specialisations. Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) provide the only EU-wide methodology capable of aligning regional strengths with EU strategic priorities, supporting diversification into related technologies, and enabling structured interregional cooperation based on complementarity rather than duplication. Therefore, S3 priorities should be systematically recognised and used across EU funding instruments to bridge topdown EU strategic goals with bottom-up regional innovation, integrating local strengths into Europe's industrial value chains.

(29c) The Programme should have an exclusive focus on civilian R&I activities. This means that all priority setting decisions, call definitions and project selection procedures are based solely on civilian needs and priorities. However, due to the volatile geopolitical landscape, the evolving nature of security threats, and the increasingly frequent possibility for spillovers of civilian technologies in the defence domain, it is essential to recognise that civilian activities might have defence relevance and that this potential defence relevance is so ubiquitous that it cannot be a basis for excluding activities from funding under this Programme. This potential defence relevance is not a violation of the civilian nature of this Programme. Where civilian actions demonstrate a credible pathway for their results to defence application, the development, deployment and industrialisation of such results may be supported under Union instruments designed for those purposes, in accordance with the specific conditions of the relevant regulations, in particular Regulation (EU) XXX [European Competitiveness Fund]. Full complementarity should be ensured between the Programme and the Specific Programme for defence research, development and innovation and implementation of both should strive to maximise the benefits of their activities for European economy, society and security.

(30) The actions supported under this Regulation should accelerate or boost investments by addressing market failures or sub-optimal investment situations, in a proportionate manner, avoiding duplication or crowding out, and by incentivising private funding, and have Union added-value. Without prejudice to the application of Articles 107 and 108 TFEU to national resources, this should also ensure consistency between the actions under the Programme and the State aid rules, thereby avoiding undue distortions of competition in the internal market. ***The Commission will ensure consistency between the State aid rules and the needs of the Programme for national co-financing to ensure the effective implementation of the Programme. To this end, the Commission will provide detailed guidance on the applicable state aid rules for national cofinancing for all actions funded under this Programme.***

(30a) The Council Recommendation of 23 May 2024, on Enhancing Research Security, emphasises the need to safeguard the Union's R&I ecosystem from malign influence, undesirable knowledge transfer, and threats to academic freedom and research integrity, while preserving openness and international cooperation. It also underscores the importance of a proportionate, risk-based approach to research security, ensuring that the Union's strategic autonomy, values, and fundamental rights are upheld. To achieve these objectives, it is essential to integrate the principles and actions set out in that Recommendation into the Programme. In particular, the Programme should support the national measures to strengthening the compliance

with the applicable Union export control rules for dual-use items and the restrictive measures adopted pursuant to Article 29 TEU and Articles 207 and 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. This will ensure that R&I activities funded under the Programme are conducted in a secure, transparent, and ethically responsible manner, while fostering global collaboration in line with the Union's interests and priorities.

(30b) Results generated through Union public funding under the Programme represent a strategic asset of the Union and its Member States. The transfer of such results — including data, know-how and intellectual property — to entities established in, controlled by, or acting on behalf of third countries that do not share the Union's fundamental values, that pose systemic risks to the Union's strategic interests, or that are subject to Union sanctions or restrictive measures, is incompatible with the objectives of the Programme and with the Union's obligations under international human rights law. Through export control regulation, beneficiaries should therefore be subject to clear and enforceable obligations to prevent such transfers, without prejudice to the open science principles and international collaboration that are central to the Programme's character. To this end, calls under this Programme could be flagged with an ex-ante indication of the likely applicability of Union exportcontrol rules to their results, to inform applicants of downstream obligations, without that indication affecting eligibility, evaluation or project-implementation security requirements.

(31) This Regulation lays down an indicative financial envelope for Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2028-2034.

(32) Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509[8] ***(the "Financial Regulation")*** applies to the Programme. It lays down the rules on the establishment and the implementation of the general budget of the Union, including the rules on grants, prizes, non-financial donations, procurement, indirect management, financial assistance, financial instruments and budgetary guarantees. ***This Regulation provides for targeted clarifications regarding specific provisions of the [Financial Regulation] to this Programme in order to ensure the proper functioning of the Programme and its ability to deliver on its objectives.***

(33) In view of ensuring consistency, a budgetary guarantee and financial instruments, including when combined with non-repayable support in blending operations, under this Programme should be implemented in accordance with Title X of the Financial Regulation and with technical arrangements, terms and conditions established by the Commission for the purposes of its application.

(34) Where Union support under the Programme is to be provided in the form of a budgetary guarantee or a financial instrument, including where combined with non-repayable support in a blending operation, with the exception of financial instruments under the EIC **– *including the Scaleup Europe Fund***, such support ***can*** be provided ***[...]*** through the ECF InvestEU Instrument in accordance with the applicable rules of the ECF InvestEU Instrument.

(35) In accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council[9], Council Regulation

[8] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj).

[9] Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 September 2013 concerning investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and repealing

(Euratom, EC) No 2988/95[10],(Euratom, EC) No 2185/96[11] and (EU) 2017/1939[12], the financial interests of the Union are to be protected through proportionate measures, including the prevention, detection, correction and investigation of irregularities and fraud, the recovery of funds lost, wrongly paid or incorrectly used and, where appropriate, the imposition of administrative sanctions. In particular, in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013 and (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) may carry out investigations, including on-the-spot checks and inspections, with a view to establishing whether there has been fraud, corruption or any other illegal activity affecting the financial interests of the Union. In accordance with Regulation (EU) 2017/1939, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) is competent to investigate and prosecute fraud and other criminal offences affecting the financial interests of the Union as provided for in Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council [13]. In accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, any person or entity receiving Union funds is to fully cooperate in the protection of the Union's financial interests, to grant the necessary rights and access to the Commission, OLAF, the European Court of Auditors and, as appropriate, to the EPPO, and to ensure that any third parties involved in the implementation of Union funds grant equivalent rights.

(36) The Programme is to be implemented in accordance with ***Article 33(2) of [Financial Regulation] as well as*** Regulation (EU) XXX of the European Parliament and of the Council [Performance Regulation] which establish~~es~~ the rules for the expenditure tracking and the performance framework for the budget, rules for ensuring a uniform application of the ***horizontal*** principles of 'do no significant harm' and gender equality referred to in Article 33(2), points (d)***, (e)*** and (f), as well as the rules for the expenditure tracking and the provisions on accessibility for persons with disabilities reflected in Articles 17.3, 20.4 and 21.1 of Annex I, of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 respectively and in line with the accessibility requirements of Annex I and III of directive 2019/882, ***as well as*** rules for establishing a Union funding portal***. As laid down in Article 33(2), points d, e and f of the [Financial Regulation],*** *(Rapp 20, EPP 479)* ***where feasible and appropriate, the Programme should ensure the effective mainstreaming of the horizontal principles, including the promotion of gender equality, the integration of the gender dimension in R&I content, the obligation to respect working and employment conditions under applicable national law, Union law, ILO conventions and collective agreements, and the principle of 'do no significant harm'.*** *(SD 480)* ***[Performance Framework] provides a framework for the streamlining of the application Article 33(2), points d and f of the [Financial Regulation]. Furthermore, the Commission should take into account, as part of the principle of proportionality as defined under Article 5 of Regulation [XXXX/XXXX] (Performance Framework Regulation), that Technology Readiness Levels 1 to 4, call topics addressing technologies or knowledge with such general application that its impact cannot feasibly be assessed as well as frontier research, and training of researchers, in the meaning of this Programme, do not have significant impacts on***

[10] Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2988/95 of 18 December 1995 on the protection of the European Communities financial interests (OJ L 312, 23.12.95, p.1).

[11] Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/96 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities (OJ L292,15.11.96 , p.2).

[12] Council Regulation (EU) 2017/1939 of 12 October 2017 implementing enhanced cooperation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office ('the EPPO') (OJ L283, 31.10.2017,, p.1).

[13] Directive (EU) 2017/1371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2017 on the fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law (OJ L 198, 28.7.2017, p. 29).

Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1074/1999,(OJ L248, 18.9.2013, p. 1.

the environment in the meaning of this principle. Additionally, human progress requires space for creative bottom-up ideas to be supported, even where their overall results may be uncertain.

(36b) The complementarity between the Horizon Europe programme and other Union instruments – including the European Competitiveness Fund - should not come at the expense of the traceability of expenditure or the prerogatives of the budgetary authority. The contribution of the Horizon Europe programme to jointly funded actions should remain explicitly identifiable at all stages of the budgetary cycle and duly reflected in the Programme Performance Statement.

(36c) The provisions of this Regulation as well as its governance arrangements should be conducive to proper decision-making by the budgetary authority and to appropriate parliamentary oversight. In particular, any specification of programme internal architecture should be duly reflected in the budget nomenclature through the introduction of corresponding budget lines.

(36d) In line with Article 15(3) of the Financial Regulation, research decommitments shall be re-used to help strengthen the Union's research capacity, without any pre-emptive cap restricting the budget authority in the annual budget procedure.

(36e) The implications of this Regulation for the Union budget have been assessed pursuant to Article 310(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Sufficient financial and human resources should be provided for its implementation, while considering the impact of the financing on other Union programmes or policies and ensuring its compatibility with the multiannual financial framework, the system of own resources and the corresponding interinstitutional agreement, as well as with the budgetary principles laid down in Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

(36f) In order to ensure uniform conditions for the implementation of the Programme through certain work programmes, call texts adopted after a proposal by a Lead Expert, investment guidelines for the EIC Fund, specific rules for the implementation of the Mutual Insurance Mechanism and criteria for the certification of national schemes for the EIC Plug-in pursuant this Regulation, implementing powers should be conferred on the Commission. Those powers should be exercised in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council .

(36g) The examination procedure set out in Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council should be used for the adoption of the calls.

(36h) In order to implement specific provisions under this Regulation, the power to adopt acts in accordance with Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union should be delegated to the Commission in respect of adopting work programmes for Pillar II or setting out the decision-making framework for the application of restrictions to participation in specific calls. It is of particular importance that the Commission carry out appropriate consultations during its preparatory work, including at expert level, and that those consultations be conducted in accordance with the principles laid down in the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making of 13 April 2016. In particular, to ensure equal participation in the preparation of delegated acts, the European Parliament and the Council receive all documents at the same time as Member States' experts, and their experts systematically have access to meetings of Commission expert groups dealing with the preparation of delegated acts.

(37) Pursuant to Article 85(1) of Council Decision (EU) 2021/1764[14], persons and entities established in overseas countries and territories are eligible for funding subject to the rules and objectives of the Programme and possible arrangements applicable to the Member State to which the relevant overseas country or territory is linked.

(38) The Programme replaces the Programme Horizon Europe established by Regulation (EU) 2021/695. Regulation (EU) 2021/695 should therefore be repealed.

HAVE ADOPTED THIS REGULATION:

Title I – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

Chapter I

General Provisions

Article 1

Subject matter

In accordance with TFEU Article 182 this Regulation establishes Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (the 'Programme') for the period of the Multiannual Financial Framework (the 'MFF') 2028-2034 and sets out the rules for participation and dissemination concerning indirect actions under the Programme and determines the framework governing the Union support for Research and Innovation activities for the same duration. It also lays down the ***scientific and technological*** objectives of the Programme***, fixes the relevant priorities, indicates the broad lines of activities*** and ***lays down*** its budget for that period, the forms of Union funding and the rules for providing such funding. The Programme shall be implemented through:

(a) the Specific Programme established by Council Decision XX, ***which shall have an exclusive focus on civilian activities***

(b) the Specific Programme ***for*** defence research, development and innovation established by Regulation (EU)[XXX] [European Competitiveness Fund].

This Regulation shall not apply to the Specific Programme ***for*** defence research, development and innovation referred to in paragraph 2, point (b). Activities to be carried out under this Specific Programme and which are laid down in Regulation (EU)[XXX][European Competitiveness Fund] shall ***support research and development of defence products and technologies, including disruptive and collaborative research technologies for defence and scaling of disruptive technologies for defence***.

The terms Horizon Europe, 'the Programme' and 'Specific Programme' used in this Regulation refer to matters relevant only to the Specific Programme referred to in paragraph 2, point (a), unless otherwise specified.

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[14] Council Decision (EU) 2021/1764 of 5 October 2021 on the association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other (Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland) (OJ L 355, 7.10.2021, p. 6–134).

Article 2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Regulation, the following definitions apply:

(1) ‘research infrastructures’ ***means*** facilities that provide resources and services to conduct research and foster innovation in their fields***, including the associated human resources, major equipment or sets of instruments, which may be 'single sited ''virtual' or 'distributed’***; ***knowledge-related facilities such as collections, archives or scientific data infrastructures; computing systems, communication networks and any other infrastructure of a unique nature and open to external users, essential to achieve excellence in R&I; which may, where relevant, be used for purposes other than research, for example for education or public services;***

(2) ‘technology infrastructures’ ***means*** facilities, equipment, capabilities and resources**,** ***including test beds, pilot lines, pilot plants, demonstration facilities, cleanrooms and living labs, that enable and accelerate the development, testing, scaling up and validation of innovations*** - from pre-competitive applied research services up to demonstration and validation ***activities - towards market and/or societal adoption, and that support competitiveness***;

(3) ‘non-bankable’ means that the legal entity is not yet able to attract sufficient investment to fully implement its business plan and compete internationally;

(4) ‘blended finance’ means financial support provided under the European Innovation Council (‘EIC’) consisting of a combination of a grant and an investment ***in equity or other repayable form of support***;

(5) ‘deep tech’ means an innovation with the potential to deliver transformative solutions and that is based on cutting-edge advances in science, technology and engineering;

(6) ‘European Partnership’ means an initiative, where the Union together with private and/or public partners commit to jointly supporting the development, implementation and evaluation of a programme of activities, and where the costs are shared between all partners;

(6a) 'smart specialisation strategy' means the national or regional innovation strategies which set priorities in order to build competitive advantage by developing and matching R&I own strengths to business needs in order to address emerging opportunities and market developments in a coherent manner, while avoiding duplication and fragmentation of efforts; a smart specialisation strategy may take the form of, or be included in, a national or regional R&I (R&I) strategic policy framework;

(6b) 'Seal of Excellence' means a quality label which shows that a proposal submitted to a call for proposals exceeded all of the evaluation thresholds set out in the relevant call documents, but could not be funded due to lack of budget available for that call for proposals in the Work Programme and might receive support from other Union or national sources of funding;

(7) ‘open access’ means online access to results, provided free ***of charge****;*

(8) ‘open science’ means an approach to the scientific process that includes early and open sharing of research, open access to and responsible management of results, reproducibility measures, and involving citizens and end users in R&I;

(9) ‘pre-commercial procurement' means the public or private procurement of research and development services involving risk-benefit sharing under market conditions, and competitive development in phases, where there is a clear separation of the research

and development services procured from the deployment of commercial volumes of end-products;

(10) ‘procurement of innovative solutions' means public or private procurement where procurers act as a launch customer for innovative goods or services which are not yet available on a large-scale commercial basis, and may include conformity testing;

(11) ‘background' means any data, knowledge or know how whatever its form or nature, tangible or intangible, including any rights such as intellectual property rights, that is held prior to the accession to a given action ***and identified by the beneficiaries in a written agreement as needed for implementing the action or for valorising its results;***

(11a) 'dissemination' means the public disclosure of the results, other than resulting from protecting or valorisation of the results, including by scientific publications in any medium;

(12) 'valorisation’ means the ***process of creating broad societal and/or economic value from*** results ***in further activities other than those covered by the action concerned***, including ***through standardisation, by transforming data, know-how and results into new products, services, solutions and science-informed public policies, and fostering*** deployment;

(12a) 'fair and reasonable conditions' means appropriate conditions, including possible financial terms, taking into account the specific circumstances of the request for access, for example, the cost for its protection, the actual or potential value of the results or background to which access is requested and/or the scope, duration or other characteristics of the exploitation envisaged;

(13) ‘international European research organisation' means an international organisation, the majority of whose members are Member States or associated countries, whose principal objective is to promote scientific and technological cooperation in Europe;

(14) ***'non-profit legal entity' means a legal entity which by its legal form is non-profitmaking or which has a legal or statutory obligation not to distribute profits to its shareholders or individual members;***

(15) ‘small or medium-sized enterprise’ or ‘SME’ means a micro, small or medium-sized enterprise as defined in Article 2 of the Annex to Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC[15];

(16) ‘small mid-cap’ means a small mid-cap enterprise as defined in point 2 of the Annex to Commission Recommendation (EU) 2025/1099[16];

(17) ‘results’ means any tangible or intangible outcome of a given action, such as data, knowledge or know-how, whatever its form or nature and whether or not it can be protected, as well as any rights attached to it, including intellectual property rights;

(18) ‘ERC frontier research action’ means a principal investigator-led research action, including ERC Proof of Concept, hosted by single or multiple beneficiaries receiving funding from the European Research Council (ERC);

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[15] Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (OJ L 124, 20.5.2003, p. 36).

[16] Commission Recommendation (EU) 2025/1099 of 21 May 2025 on the definition of small mid-cap enterprises (OJ L, 28.5.2025, p. 1)

(19) ‘research and training action’ means an action geared towards the improvement of the skills, knowledge and career prospects of researchers, promoting mobility between countries, sectors or disciplines;

(20) ‘coordination and support action’ means an action contributing to the objectives of the Programme, excluding R&I (R&I) activities, except when undertaken under the component 'widening participation and ERA integration' of the part IV ’European Research Area’; and bottom-up coordination without co-funding of research activities from the Union that allows for cooperation between legal entities from Member States and associated countries in order to strengthen the ERA;

(20a) ‘research action’ means a collaborative action primarily consisting of basic research activities aiming to establish new scientific knowledge, establish general principles or formulate new technology concepts in order to advance the frontier of science and technology;

(20b) 'research and innovation action' means a collaborative action primarily consisting of activities aiming to establish new knowledge and to explore the feasibility of a new or improved technology, product, process, service or solution that are focused mainly on early stages of the R&I continuum, which primarily include basic and applied research, technology development and integration, testing, demonstration and validation on a small-scale prototype in a controlled environment;

(20c) ‘innovation action’ means a collaborative action primarily consisting of activities directly aiming to produce plans and arrangements or designs for new, altered or improved products, processes or services, possibly including prototyping, testing and demonstrating their performance in relevant and operational environments.

(21) ‘indirect actions’ means ***actions*** to which the Union provides financial support ***under this Regulation*** and which are undertaken by participants; *(Rapp 34)*

(22) ‘direct actions’ means R&I related activities undertaken by the Commission through its JRC;

(23) ‘innovation ecosystem’ means an ecosystem which brings together organisations whose functional goal is to enable technology development and innovation and which encompasses relations between material resources (such as funds, equipment, and facilities, including research and technology infrastructures), institutional entities (such as higher education ***and vocational training*** *(RE 526)* institutions and support services, research and technology organisations, ***standardisation organisations,*** companies, investors - including venture capitalists - and financial intermediaries) and national, regional and local policy-making and funding entities.

(24) ‘knowledge triangle’ means ***[…]*** networks between education institutions, research organisations and business with the aim to create innovation ecosystems that cater for the creation of an innovation pipeline from the inception of innovation through entrepreneurial education to the creation of startups and the growth of scale-ups. *(Rapp 36)*

(24b) ‘science diplomacy’ means the direct or indirect use of science, scientific evidence and scientific cooperation to inform and support foreign policy at different levels, as well as to the deployment of diplomacy to support and promote international cooperation and scientific progress;

(24c) ‘Research security’ refers to anticipating and managing risks related to: (a) the undesirable transfer of critical knowledge and technology that may affect the security of the Union and its Member States, for instance if channelled to military or intelligence purposes in third countries; (b) malign influence on research where

research can be instrumentalised by or from third countries in order to inter alia create disinformation or incite self-censorship among students and researchers infringing academic freedom and research integrity in the Union; (c) ethical or integrity violations, where knowledge and technologies are used to suppress, infringe on or undermine Union values and fundamental rights, as defined in the Treaties.

(24d) "Critical knowledge and technology" means knowledge and technology, including know-how, in emerging and disruptive areas and in domains that are key to economic competitiveness, social welfare and the security of the Union and its Member States, including knowledge and technology with dual-use potential, and in which, consequently, overdependency on third countries is undesirable, taking into account the dynamic nature of research security and evolving risks. *Article 3*

Programme objectives

1. The Programme shall strengthen the Union's scientific ***and*** technological ***bases, through*** excellent ***R&I based on open competition, thereby supporting prosperity, and competitiveness, as well as addressing global societal challenges***

The specific objectives of the Programme are:

(1) ***Develop, promote and advance scientific and technological excellence to support the creation and diffusion of high-quality knowledge, skills, technologies and solutions.***

(2) Create high-quality knowledge, skills and attractive careers for researchers ***and doctoral candidates, and*** support the realisation of the European Research Area (ERA).

(3) Increase EU-wide ***and international*** collaborative research, ***innovation,*** knowledge sharing and valorisation***, taking due account of research security related risks***.

(4) ***Promote open and secure international R&I cooperation.***

(5) ***Ensure that the Union provides a safe and enabling environment for researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs, with a geographically and disciplined agnostic focus on researchers at risk, including breaches of the freedom of scientific research, of scientific integrity, or of undue interference in research activities, professional or private life, including when this interference comes as retribution for the peaceful exercise of basic human rights.***

(6) Align EU, national and regional ***scientific and technological*** priorities***, including through Smart Specialisation Strategies,*** to create a pan-European ***R&I*** ecosystem ***and facilitate synergies with regional innovation ecosystems*** *(Greens 578)* ***maximizing the complementarity between the Programme and the NRPP regulation funds.***

(7) Reduce national and regional disparities in ***R&I*** capacity, skills, and talent to strengthen innovation ecosystems ***by fostering excellence-based participation in the Programme and effectively harnessing excellence present across the Union***

(8) ***Strengthening the Union's capacity to attract and retain the best talents worldwide and enhancing R&I ecosystems aiming at establishing the Union as a leading destination for researchers in the world***.

(9) Improve the Union's position in ***R&I***, with a specific focus on strategic ***and emerging*** technologies and disruptive innovation, ***and*** facilitate the diffusion of

innovative solutions***, including by contributing to the general and specific objectives of the European Competitiveness Fund***

(10) De-risk***, incentivise*** and mobilise more private ***R&I*** financing, particularly for supporting deep tech and the scaling up of innovative startups and SMEs.

(11) Ensure the effective promotion and integration of cooperation with third countries, including low- and middle-income countries, and international organisations and initiatives based on mutual benefits, the Union interests including the promotion of peace, multilateralism and strengthen the Union's soft power, international commitments and, where appropriate, reciprocity.

Article 4

Programme structure

1. For the purposes of the Specific Programme referred to in Article 1(2)***a***, the Programme shall be structured in parts as follows, which contribute to the general and specific objectives set out in Article 3:

(a) ***Pillar*** I 'Excellent Science', with the following components:

(i) the European Research Council (ERC);

(ii) Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA).

(iii) Science for Union policies: non-nuclear direct actions of the Joint Research Centre (JRC).

(iv) ***European support for Researchers at Risk; (v) Fast Track to Excellence.***

(b) ***Pillar*** II 'Competitiveness and Society', with the following components:

(i) ***Competitiveness Window I 'Clean Energy and Industrial Decarbonisation';***

(ii) ***Competitiveness Window II 'Biotechnology, Agriculture, Health, and Sustainable Transition';***

(iii) ***Competitiveness Window III 'Digital Leadership';***

(iv) ***Competitiveness Window IV 'Critical Raw Materials, Security and Space';***

(v) ***Society Window I 'Just Green Transition';***

(vi) ***Society Window II 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Healthy Societies';***

(vii) ***Society Window III 'Inclusive Digital Societies';***

(viii) ***Society Window IV 'Resilient Societies'; (ix) Horizontal Window, comprising:***

(a) Missions;

(b) the New European Bauhaus Facility;

(c) Metrology Partnership;

(d) Pilot Initiative for Sectoral Plans; (x) Fast Track to Innovation.

(c) ***Pillar*** III 'Innovation', with the following components:

(i) the European Innovation Council (EIC);

(ii) ***European*** Innovation ecosystems***,*** including activities to foster the integration of the knowledge triangle – higher education, ***R&I***, and business – across the Union***, in particular through the activities of Knowledge and Innovation Communities set up under Regulation (EU) …/… [EIT Regulation]***.

(d) ***Pillar*** IV 'European Research Area', with the following components:

(i) ***widening participation and ERA integration;***

(ii) research and technology infrastructures;

(iii) ***reforming and enhancing the European R&I system.***

Article 5

Horizontal principles of the Programme The

Programme shall:

(a) ***promote and*** ensure a ***collaborative*** multidisciplinary approach ***as essential driver of scientific progress***, ***fostering a human centric approach as well as the integration of diverse scientific perspectives to address complex scientific challenges*** , where appropriate, and provide for the integration of social sciences***,*** humanities ***and the arts*** (***SSHA***) across all components under the Programme, including specific call ***topics*** for proposals on ***SSHA*** related topics***, technology oriented call topics in which a meaningful share of the research tasks, excluding dissemination and communication, shall be dedicated to SSHA disciplines, and topics dedicated to the cultural and creative industries***.

(aa) be implemented with the objective of simplification of project application and management. The Commission or the relevant funding body shall ensure that sufficient guidance and information is made available to all potential participants at the time of publication of the call for proposals, in particular the applicable model grant agreement. Only information which is absolutely necessary for a good qualitative evaluation of the scientific or innovative quality and the eligibility of a proposal shall be required in a proposal.

(b) advance scientific knowledge and contribute to the creation of informed, effective, and responsive public policies across the Union and beyond. The Programme shall actively promote the use of the results of publicly funded research and of scientific evidence in policy-making processes at all levels, fostering stronger links between research, innovation, and the development of evidence-informed public policies ***and standards***. This shall include encouraging collaborative mechanisms, R&I initiatives and sciencefor-policy interfaces connecting policy makers with the scientific community, as well as facilitating the use of research outcomes in shaping future legislative and regulatory frameworks at all levels. Special emphasis shall be placed on ensuring that scientific insights are accessible and relevant to decision makers and citizens, with instruments for the effective use of research results, policy briefs, and recommendations.

(ba) contribute to increasing public and private investment in R&I in Member States, thereby contributing to reach an overall expenditure of at least 3% of Union Gross Domestic Product ('GDP') in research and development. Wherever possible, the instruments under the Programme shall aim to leverage national investments.

(bb) foster systemic synergies and coordination with other Union programmes and funds, particularly the European Competitiveness Fund and Cohesion Policy funds, to ensure a seamless transition and complementarity across the entire R&I value chain and to maximize the collective impact of Union investments, including for the valorisation and exploitation of the results of this Programme and the technology transfer, and market and industrial uptakes.

(bc) ensure that the governance and implementation structures of the Programme, including advisory bodies and boards, promote diversity and a broad geographical representation across the Union, alongside diversity in expertise and gender, while fully respecting the excellence-based selection of projects. This shall be applied on the basis of the approach adopted along the previous programming period 2021-2027, while strengthening its effectiveness across the entire Programme.

(c) encourage open science practices including by ensuring open access to peer-reviewed scientific publications ***resulting from research funded under this programme. O***pen access to research data***, while ensuring its responsible management o and safe, secure and permanent storage,*** and other results ***shall be granted*** following the principle 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary'.

(ca) contribute to the Union's climate objectives by, where appropriate, integrating climate considerations into R&I content and ensuring appropriate climate mainstreaming across actions under the Programme.

(cb) promote co-creation and co-design through the engagement of citizens and civil society and ensure transparency and accountability of public funding in R&I projects.

(cc) promote stable and attractive research careers, fair remuneration, secure working conditions, social protection and action against precarious employment in research and higher education.

Article 6

Budget

1. The ***Programme*** envelope ***for the implementation*** of the ***Regulation*** for the period ***20282034*** shall be EUR ***200 003 562 000*** in current prices ***(EUR 177 010 000 000 in 2025 prices)***.

2. The indicative distribution of the amount referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article for the Specific Programme referred to in Article 1(2)(a), shall be:

   a) EUR ***5***5 480 000 000 for ***Pillar*** I 'Excellent Science', of which:

   i) EUR 36 000 000 000 for the European Research Council; ii)

   EUR 13 880 000 000 for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions;

   iii) EUR 2 600 000 000 for non-nuclear direct actions of Joint

   Research Centre

(JRC); ***iv) EUR 1 000 000 000 for European support for Researchers at Risk;***

v) EUR 2 000 000 000 for Fast Track to Excellence

b) EUR 88 766 000 000for ***Pillar*** II 'Competitiveness and Society', of which:

i) EUR 25 331 000 000 for ***Competitiveness Window I "Clean Energy and Industrial Decarbonisation"***;

ii) EUR ***21 000*** 000 000 for ***Competitiveness Window II "Biotechnology, Agriculture, Health, and Sustainable Transition"***; iii) EUR **19 000** 000 000 for ***Competitiveness Window III "Digital Leadership"***;

iv) EUR 6 435 000 000 for ***Competitiveness Window IV "Critical Raw Materials, Security and Space";***

v) EUR ***3 500 000 000*** for ***Society Window I "Just Green Transition";***

vi) EUR ***3 000 000 000*** for ***Society Window II "Sustainable, inclusive and healthy Societies";*** vii) EUR ***2 500 000 000*** for ***Society Window III "Inclusive digital societies";*** viii) EUR ***2 500 000 000*** for ***Society Window IV "Resilient Societies";***

ix) EUR ***3 000 000 000*** for ***Horizontal Window, of which:***

(1) EUR 500 000 000 for the New European Bauhaus Facility;

(2) EUR 1 990 000 000 for European Missions

(3) EUR 500 000 000 for Metrology Partnership

(4) EUR 10 000 000 for Pilot Initiative for Sectoral Plans

x) EUR ***2 500 000 000*** for ***Fast Track to Innovation.***

c) EUR 3***6 353 562*** 000 for ***Pillar*** III 'Innovation'***, of which:***

i) EUR ***32 484 562 000*** for ***the European Innovation Council; ii)*** EUR ***3 869 000 000*** for ***European Innovation Ecosystems, of which***

(1) EUR 500 000 000 for the European Institute of Innovation and Technology

(2) EUR 2 500 000 000 for KICs under the European Institute of Innovation and Technology

d) EUR ***19 404*** 000 000 for ***Pillar*** IV 'European Research Area', ***of which;***

i) EUR ***6 600*** 000 000 for widening participation and ERA integration***;*** ii) EUR ***12 004 000 000*** for ***research and technology infrastructures;***

iii) EUR ***800 000 000*** for ***reforming and enhancing the European R&I system.***

2a. The Programme shall contribute to the broadline "Agriculture, food and feed systems, and food security" at a level of spending that is at least proportionally commensurate with that under [Horizon Europe 2021-2027].

2b At least 50% of the budget of the Competitiveness and Society Windows in Pillar II shall be allocated to actions under expert-led calls as referred to in Article 15b(3).

2c. Each of the Pillars identified shall form a Chapter in the budgetary nomenclature of the Union's annual budget. Those Pillars, shall have its own budget line or lines in the nomenclature of the Union's annual budget. Separate budget lines shall be established for any entity created under Articles 185 and 187 of the TFEU which are entrusted with the implementation of a part of the budget of this Programme. *(Rapp 95)* ***Annex II sets out an indicative budgetary nomenclature. By way of derogation from Article 30(1)(a) of the Financial Regulation, the Commission may transfer appropriations autonomously within the Pillars of Horizon Europe up to a maximum of 10 % of the appropriations for the financial year shown on the budget line from which the transfer is made. Transfers above that threshold shall be subject to the procedure laid down in Article 31 of the Financial Regulation.***

2d. Commitment appropriations corresponding to the amount of decommitments resulting from total or partial non-implementation of research projects shall be made available again to this Programme, in the context of the budgetary procedure, in priority for the same objective.

3. The amount referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article and the amounts of additional resources referred to in Article 7 may also be used for technical and administrative assistance for the implementation of the Programme, such as preparatory, monitoring, control, audit***, experimentation*** and evaluation activities, information technology systems and platforms, information and communication activities, including corporate communication on the political priorities of the Union, and all other technical and administrative assistance or staff-related expenses incurred by the Commission for the management of the Programme. ***A part of resources used under this paragraph shall be used for the implementation of Article 20.***

3a. The Commission shall ensure separate accounting of expenditure incurred under paragraph 3 for monitoring, control, audit, and evaluation purposes, including corporate IT systems used for those purposes. The Commission shall submit annually to the European Parliament and to the Council a breakdown of administrative and operational expenditure, distinguishing at least between:

(a) monitoring and performance reporting;
(b) ex ante and ex post controls;
(c) audit and anti-fraud activities;
(d) staff costs, including executive agency staff;
(e) IT systems and platforms;
(f) information and communication activities; (g) implementation of Article 20.

4. If necessary to enable the management of actions not completed by 31 December 2034, appropriations may be entered in the Union budget beyond 2034 to cover the expenses necessary and to enable the management of actions not completed by the end of the Programme.

5. Budgetary commitments for actions extending over more than one financial year may

be broken down into annual instalments over several years.

Article 7

Additional resources

1. Member States, Union institutions, bodies and agencies, third countries, international organisations, international financial institutions, ***philanthropic organisations*** or other third parties, may make additional financial or non-financial contributions to the Programme. Additional financial contributions shall constitute external assigned revenue within the meaning of Article 21(2), points (a), (d), or (e) or Article 21(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509.
2. Resources allocated to Member States under shared management***, as well as voluntary direct financial contributions made by Member States pursuant to paragraph 1,*** may, at their request, be made available to the Programme. The Commission shall implement those resources directly or indirectly in accordance with Article 62(1), point (a) or (c) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509. They shall be additional to the amount referred to in Article 6(1) of this Regulation. Those resources shall be used for the benefit of the Member State concerned. Where the Commission has not entered into a legal commitment under direct or indirect management for additional amounts thus made available to the Programme, the corresponding uncommitted amounts may, at the request of the Member State concerned, be transferred back to one or more respective source programmes or their successors.

2a. The Commission shall establish a strategic dialogue with philanthropic actors organisations and other non-state research funders to align early in identifying gaps, avoiding duplication and identify opportunities for collaboration within the Programme and promote instruments aligning public and philanthropic resources.

2b. By way of derogation from Article 212(3), the first, second and fourth subparagraphs, of the Financial Regulation, revenue, repayments and recoveries from financial instruments funded from this Regulation and its predecessors provisioned through the European Competitiveness Fund shall from … [1 January 2028 / programme start date], be used to provide Union support under the Programme. By way of derogation from Article 21(3), point (f), and in accordance with Article 21(5) of the Financial Regulation, these resources shall constitute external assigned revenue to the programme.

Revenue, repayments and recoveries from financial instruments implemented by the EIC Fund shall remain on the balance of the EIC Fund.

Article 8

Alternative, combined and cumulative funding

1. The Programme shall be implemented in synergy with other Union programmes***, including those within the framework of the NRPP regulation to effectively reduce regional disparities in the area of R&I*** *(EPP 850)* ***and the Euratom Research and Training Programme***. An action that has received a Union contribution from another programme may also receive a contribution under this Programme. The rules of the relevant Union programme shall apply to the corresponding contribution or a single set of rules may be applied to all contributions and a single legal commitment may be concluded. If the Union contribution is based on eligible costs, the cumulative support from the Union budget shall not exceed the total eligible costs of the action and may be calculated on a pro-rata basis in accordance with the documents setting out the conditions for support.

2. Award procedures under the Programme may be jointly conducted under direct or indirect management with Member States, Union institutions, bodies and agencies, third countries, international organisations, international financial institutions, or other third parties, provided the protection of the financial interests of the Union is ensured. Such procedures shall be subject to a single set of rules and lead to the conclusion of single legal commitments. For that purpose, the partners to the joint award procedure may make resources available to the Programme in accordance with Article 7 of this Regulation, or the partners may be entrusted with the implementation of the award procedure, where applicable in accordance with Article 62(1), point (c), of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509. In joint award procedures, representatives of the partners to the joint award procedure may also be members of the evaluation committee referred to in Article 153(3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509,
3. Under this programme, ***a Seal of Excellence*** shall be awarded to actions ***that have been assessed in a call for proposals under the Programme, that exceeded all of the evaluation thresholds of that call for proposals, and*** that have not been financed under the Programme due to budgetary constraints.
4. The Member States may finance actions to which a Seal ***of Excellence*** was awarded.
5. ***The Commission and Member States shall ensure systematic cross checking of funding under this Programme with other Union programmes and instruments in order to prevent double funding of the same action or beneficiary.***

Article 8a Implementation of horizontal principles of the Union budget

1. ***In accordance with Article 33(2) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 and supplementing the framework set out in Regulation (EU) XXX [Performance Framework Regulation] to ensure its streamlined and uniform application across the Union budget, this Article specifies the meaning of the principles of 'do no significant harm' and gender equality referred to in points (d) and (f) of that paragraph respectively, as well as of other horizontal principles regarding working and employment conditions referred to in point (e) of that paragraph under this Programme.***
2. ***In accordance with Article 5 of [Performance Framework], the Commission shall preassess each topic under a call for proposals and ensure it is compliant with Article 33(2)d of [Financial Regulation]. Call topics addressing lower TRL activities, call topics addressing technologies or knowledge with such general application that its impact cannot feasibly be assessed, no specific requirement shall be set for the compliance with Article 33(2)d of the Financial Regulation considering that they have no significant impact on the environment. For other calls without thematic directionality, the Commission shall duly apply the proportionality principle as referred to in Article 5(2) of the Performance Regulation taking into account the objectives and added value of these calls and the neglectable risk of negative environmental impact.***
3. ***In accordance with Article 6(2) of [Performance Framework], beneficiaries of this Programme shall, in compliance with Article 33(2)e of [Financial Regulation] attest to compliance with the applicable working and employment conditions under applicable national law, Union law, ILO conventions and collective agreements as part of their application. That attestation shall serve solely to demonstrate compliance with those conditions and shall not be used as a basis for any other criterion.***
4. ***In accordance with Article 7 of [Performance Framework], the measures under Article 8b shall ensure that the Programme supports gender equality. Every beneficiary of award procedures under this Programme shall in the grant agreement attest to compliance with***

the applicable Union and national legislation relating to gender equality and equal treatment. That attestation shall serve solely to demonstrate compliance with those conditions and shall not be used as a basis for any other criterion.

Article 8b Gender equality

1. ***The Programme shall ensure the effective promotion of equal opportunities for all, including through the implementation of gender mainstreaming.***
2. ***The Programme shall aim to address the causes of gender imbalance. Particular attention shall be paid to ensuring gender balance in relevant advisory bodies, such as evaluation panels, expert groups, Councils and Boards.***
3. ***Applications under this Programme shall be required to address the gender dimension or justify why it does not have to be address. The Commission may identify calls where application of this paragraph is not relevant nor needed.***
4. ***In order to be eligible for support under this Programme, any public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments (including private research organisations and private higher education establishments) receiving funding from the Programme shall have a Gender Equality Plan in place that is adopted by its highest management, is supported by dedicated resources and is publicly available.***

Article 9

Third countries associated to the Programme

1. The Programme ***shall*** *(S&D 871)* be opened to the participation of the following third countries through full or partial association ***to the Programme***, in accordance with the objectives laid down in Article 3 and applicable to:

   (a) members of the European Free Trade Association which are members of the European Economic Area, ***in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Agreement on the European Economic Area*** as well ***Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican City, in accordance with the conditions laid down in the relevant agreements***;

   (b) acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidates, ***in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in Union programmes established in the framework of the relevant international agreements between the Union and those countries***;

   (c) European Neighbourhood Policy countries***, in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in Union programmes established in the framework of the relevant international agreements between the Union and those countries***;

   (ca) Switzerland and the United Kingdom, in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for participation in Union Programmes established by the international agreements between the Union and Switzerland or the United Kingdom and consented to by the European Parliament;

   (d) other third countries***, in accordance with the conditions laid down in a specific international agreement covering the participation of the third country to any***

Union Programme and which includes a list of all Union Programmes to which the third country is associated, including the scope of each association.

Pursuant to Article 218(10) TFEU, the European Parliament shall be immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedures referred to in this Article.

1a. Prior to the association of a third country to the Programme, the Commission shall conduct an analysis of the state of academic freedom, including the freedom of scientific research, in that third country. The Commission shall submit that analysis to the European Parliament and the Council. Where the protection and promotion of academic freedom, including the freedom of scientific research, in that third country does not meet Union standards, association of that third country to the Programme shall only be possible on the condition that the third country concerned commits to undertaking concrete measures to improve the protection and promotion of academic freedom, including the freedom of scientific research.

2. The agreements for participation in the Programme referred to in paragraph 1 shall:

(a) ensure a fair balance as regards the contributions and benefits of the third country participating in the Programme;

(b) lay down the conditions of participation in Programme, including the calculation of financial contributions, consisting of an operational contribution and a participation fee, to the Programme and its general administrative costs;

(c) not confer on the third country any decision-making power in the Programme ***whilst ensuring observer status for Associated Countries on all decisionmaking programme committees that will take effect in the parts of the Programme to which they are associated***;

(d) guarantee the rights of the Union to ensure sound financial management and to protect its financial interests.

(e) where relevant, ensure the protection of security and public order interests of the Union.

3. For the purposes of paragraph 2, point (d), the third country shall grant the necessary rights and access required under Regulations (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509***,*** (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013, ***and (EU) 2017/1939, to the Commission, OLAF and the European Court of Auditors,*** and guarantee that enforcement decisions imposing a pecuniary obligation on the basis of Article 299 TFEU, as well as judgments and orders of the Court of Justice of the European Union, are enforceable.

4. For the purpose of paragraph 1, point (d), association or partial association with other third countries shall only be possible if they fulfil all the following criteria:

(f) a good capacity in science, technology and innovation;

(g) commitment to a rules-based open market economy, including fair and equitable dealing with intellectual property rights, respect of human rights, backed by democratic institutions;

(h) active promotion of policies to improve the economic and social well-being of citizens.

(i) ***active promotion and upholding of principles in accordance with principles enshrined in the European Charter for Researchers, including freedom of scientific research;***

(j) ***sharing European values, including respecting human rights and international law, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 9 December 1948 as well as promoting gender equality and peace;***

(k) ***no contravention of the security and defence interests of the Union and the Member States as established in the framework of the common foreign and security policy pursuant to Title V TEU, including respect for the principle of good neighbourly relations.***

4a. The Commission may designate an associated country as a trusted partner of the Programme where all of the following conditions are met:

(a) ***the associated country has a demonstrated track record of sustained and substantive participation in previous Union Framework Programmes for R&I as well as commitment to sharing the impact of the Programme funded research with the Union;***

(b) ***the associated country maintains a commitment to the values referred to in Article 2 TEU, including respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights;***

(c) ***the associated country has a robust legal and institutional framework for the protection of intellectual property rights, research integrity and personal data;***

(d) ***participation of the associated country does not contravene the strategic interests of the Union or the Member States, including as regards economic security and the protection of critical knowledge and technology.***

The Commission shall maintain the designation 'trusted partner' unless it finds an associated country no longer meets one or more of the criteria set out in the first subparagraph. 5. The scope of association of each third country to the Programme shall take into account an analysis of the risks, notably those likely to affect the Union's public order and security in relevant policy areas, including economic and research security, as well as benefits and the broader objective of driving economic growth and competitiveness of the Union through innovation. ***The Commission shall submit that analysis to the European Parliament and to the Council prior to any formal exchanges with that third country concerning the association to the Programme*** accordingly, with the exception of EEA members, acceding countries, candidate countries and potential candidate countries, third countries may be excluded from parts of the Programme in accordance with this Regulation or the association agreement itself.

Article 9a

Research Security

1. The Programme shall promote research security in order to safeguard Union's competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy, and to protect research activities, results, intellectual property, data, and infrastructure from unauthorized access, cyber threats, and foreign interference. The Programme shall be implemented in accordance with the Council Recommendation of 23 May 2024 on enhancing research security and/or any other subsequent framework related to research security adopted by the Council or co-legislators.

2. To contribute to the Union's research security objectives, calls under the Windows of Pillar II, Challenge-based calls under the EIC and calls under Research and

Technology Infrastructures may be flagged when the research activities expected to be funded under the call are likely to produce results or to include activities falling within the scope of Regulation (EU) 2021/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council [17] ***or of equivalent national export-control frameworks, by reference to the relevant control list categories. That indication shall serve exclusively to inform applicants of foreseeable downstream obligations under export-control law, including with regard to dissemination of results, transfer of technology, and cooperation with entities established outside the Union. It shall not constitute a ground for restricting eligibility, for applying specific conditions to award procedures under Article 22b of this Regulation, or for imposing heightened research-security measures on projects funded under the call. For bottom-up calls, the Commission shall proactively inform winning applicants if it considers that activities to be funded through the project are likely to produce results or to include activities falling within the scope of the relevant export control regulations.***

2a. A European Research Security Network shall be established to support cooperation and the exchange of best practices concerning research security among Member States, research institutions, universities and industry partners. It shall contribute to the development of common approaches, including guidelines, risk assessment tools and training to enhance the security of research activities across the Union. The European Research Security Network shall also support awareness raising of research security, in particular, contribute to the implementation of recommendation 4 of Council Recommendation of 23 May 2024

Article 10

Implementation and forms of Union funding

1. The Programme shall be implemented in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, under direct management or under indirect management with bodies referred to in Article 62(1), point (c) of that Regulation.

2. Union funding may be provided in any form in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, in particular through grants, prizes, procurement, non-financial donations, and financial instruments. ***Grants shall be the main form of support in the Programme.***

3. With the exception of ***support provided*** under the EIC ***- including the Scaleup Europe Fund -,*** where Union support is provided in the form of a budgetary guarantee or a financial instrument, including where combined with non-repayable support in a blending operation, it ***may*** be provided through the European Competitiveness Fund InvestEU Instrument and implemented in accordance with the applicable rules of the European Competitiveness Fund InvestEU Instrument through the contribution or guarantee agreements concluded for that purpose. Where the Programme makes use of the ECF InvestEU Instrument, it shall provide the provisioning for the budgetary guarantee and the financing to financial instruments, including when combined with non-repayable support in the form of a blending operation ***within the maximum amount of the budgetary guarantee established by the ECF Regulation***.

[17] ***Regulation (EU) 2021/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 setting up a Union regime for the control of exports, brokering, technical assistance, transit and transfer of dualuse items (OJ L 206, 11.6.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/821/oj).***

4. Where Union funding is provided in the form of a grant, funding shall be provided ***in a manner that is most suitable for the relevant action and beneficiary involved, including through*** simplified cost options in particular through lump sums and unit costs for personnel, in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 ***as well as through*** actual eligible cost reimbursement

Where it is necessary to enable other sources of funding including co-investments with national resources aid rules, funding shall be provided in the form of actual eligible cost reimbursement or simplified cost options. ***Where the relevant call documents provide for such co-investment and, at the time of submission of the proposal, the competent authority of the Member State concerned has provided, on the basis of objective and pre-established conditions, a commitment to make the complementary national contribution available if the action is selected for funding under the Programme, the evaluation and selection carried out under the Programme and the resulting award decision shall constitute the sole substantive basis for granting the complementary national contribution.***

For the sound implementation of such projects, it is necessary to ensure that the needed national co-financing component is not conflicting with State aid rules. The Commission shall assess annually whether state aid rules, and the interpretation of those rules, can be further improved to facilitate national co-financing, and shall strive to resolve possible conflicting elements, either through the adjustment of the relevant state aid rules or through providing guidance to the relevant national authorities

5. ***By way of derogation from*** Article 153(3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, the evaluation committee ***shall*** be composed ***[..]*** of independent external experts. ***In duly justified cases set out in the relevant call documents adopted by the Commission, the evaluation committee may be composed partially or, in the case of coordination and support actions, partially or fully of representatives of Union institutions or bodies as referred to in Articles 68, 69, 70 or 71 of the [Financial Regulation.]***

Article 10a

Protection of the financial interests of the Union

1. The Commission shall take appropriate measures to ensure that, when actions financed under this Regulation are implemented, the financial interests of the Union are protected by the application of preventive measures against fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities, by effective controls and, if irregularities are detected, by the recovery of the amounts wrongly paid and, where appropriate, by effective, proportionate and dissuasive administrative and financial penalties.

2. Control and audit systems shall be proportionate, simplified, and risk-based, with increased use of digital tools and preventive measures. Training, including online training, shall be provided to applicants and beneficiaries to ensure a proper understanding of applicable rules and best practices, in particular regarding personnel costs.

3. The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) may carry out investigations related to all types of funding under this Regulation, including on-the-spot checks and inspections, within the remit of their mandate with a focus on serious crimes, systemic fraud and

corruption affecting the financial interests of the Union. The Commission, or any body implementing the Union budget under this Regulation, shall take appropriate corrective measures when an OLAF investigation finds irregularities. The mere fact that OLAF is investigating shall not be grounds for corrective measures.

4. Any person or entity receiving Union funds shall fully cooperate in the protection of the Union's financial interests, shall grant the necessary rights and access to the Commission, OLAF, the European Court of Auditors and as appropriate the EPPO, and shall ensure that any third parties involved in the implementation of Union funds grant equivalent rights, without prejudice to the applicable rules on the protection of personal data, including the principles of proportionality and necessity.

5. Where funds are managed by bodies referred to in Article 62(1), point (c) of the Financial Regulation, the Commission shall ensure, by including relevant provisions in its agreements with those bodies, that the above-mentioned rights of OLAF, the European Court of Auditors and the EPPO are fully respected, and that a harmonised approach is applied across their respective mandates.

Article 11

European Partnerships

1. Where necessary to achieve the objectives set out in Article 3, activities under this Regulation may be implemented through European Partnerships***, in particular under Articles 185 and 187 of the TFEU*** **.**

(1a) European Partnerships shall follow a clear lifecycle approach, including their ***identification,*** selection, implementation and monitoring, and***, when relevant,*** transitioning out of Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation 20212027*].

2. European Partnerships shall be based on a ***contractual arrangement***, agreed and signed between the partners, stipulating ***at least the following elements***:
    a. the ***R&I (Renew 957)*** results to be delivered, which shall be clear, measurable and time-bound***;***
    b. ***single set of*** reporting requirements;
    c. the related ***financial and/or in-kind*** commitments from all partners;
    d. governance arrangements with a mechanism for partners to discuss and agree on the partnerships' programming and activities.

Before the Union commits to the contractual arrangement, the Union's participation in a Partnership shall be included in the relevant Work Programme as referred to in Article 11b(3). The reference in the Work Programme shall include points a, b and c. The wording for points a, b and c in the contractual arrangement shall be identical to the wording adopted in the Work Programme.

3. European Partnerships ***may primarily (EPP 108, Greens 970)*** be implemented by entrusting budget implementation tasks from ***the Programme*** to bodies established pursuant to Articles 185 and 187 TFEU, in accordance with Article 62(1), point (c), of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509. ***Where appropriate, additional budget implementation tasks from other Union Programmes may be entrusted to these bodies as well. A single establishing act***

pursuant to 188 TFEU shall provide the legal framework, including where appropriate harmonised rules, for the establishment of bodies under Article 187 TFEU. Decisions to establish a body shall take the form of an annex to that act. That annex shall set out the implementation of paragraph 2 of this Article for a specific partnership, as well as the financial contributions from all partners. Where that annex provides for additional budget implementation tasks from other Union Programmes, it shall also stipulate the share of the Union's financial contribution to the Partnership from the budget of other Union Programmes. (EPP 108) The Horizon Europe budget shall be used exclusively for support to R&I activities provided for by this Regulation.

3a. At any given time a maximum of 35 partnerships may exist.

4. For European Partnerships established pursuant to paragraphs 2 and 3 of this Article, support from the Programme shall be conditional upon efficient use of Union financing, a proportionate contribution from other partners at least matching the Union contribution and voting rights for the Union in the governing bodies ensuring protection of the interests of the Union in the partnership.

European Partnerships shall:

a. be established only in ***exceptional and duly justified*** cases where Union action alone or other forms of support under the Programme cannot achieve the desired objectives***, and where a joint commitment from the Union and the partners other than the Union to a shared Strategic Research, Innovation and Deployment Agenda (SRIDA) backed by substantial budgetary commitments is demonstrated, reflecting the objectives, nature and expected impact of the partnerships;***

b. be established for the purpose of addressing challenges that require a critical mass of resources and a unified and coordinated approach, both in terms of programming and implementation, across actors.

c. align with and assist in the implementation of major Union policies and policy initiatives.

d. be selected in a competitive ***and transparent*** manner based on a set of quantifiable lifecycle criteria and a strong portfolio approach, resulting in a coherent set of initiatives***, ensuring diverse participation across Europe***.

e. be based on ex ante, long-term and formal commitments from all partners to contribute financially***, in-kind and/or in cash,*** to the resources of the European Partnership***.***

f. ***publish their calls on the Funding & Tender Portal***

g. ***where third countries are involved, ensure equitable and inclusive partnership arrangements, including fair participation of research-performing organisations and appropriate data and capacity-strengthening provisions***

5 a. The implementation of European Partnerships shall be based on SRIDA agreed between the partners, detailing the thematic priorities and desired scientific and socioeconomic results, as well as a roadmap of planned activities covering at least the duration of the Programme.

6. Contributions from Partners other than the Union shall take the following forms:

a. financial contributions to the ***administrative*** budget of the initiative;

b. ***in-kind contributions through*** co-financing by the Partners of their own participation, or that of their members, in projects funded through the initiative ***as well as through additional activities***.

7. All Partners other than the Union shall ***make public*** information on the structure, membership and activities developed within the partnership. In cases where partnerships are concluded with representative organisations and associations, this shall include regular information on their membership.

(7a) European Partnerships shall be selected following a competitive, open, nondiscriminatory, and transparent procedure, on the basis of areas proposed by the Commission ***after consulting the European Parliament, Member States, and where possible, associated countries and relevant stakeholders, and established only in the most strategically relevant cases where Union action alone or other forms of support under the Programme cannot achieve the desired objectives in addressing research and innovation challenges***. ***C***andidate partnerships shall comply with the following selection criteria:

i. portfolio relevance: ***partnership portfolios shall demonstrate a clear R&I orientation and relevance, ensure*** overall consistency***,*** coherence ***and complementarity*** of the partnership portfolio, provided that candidates meet all selection criteria and demonstrate relevance as part of a strategic portfolio of actions;

ii. critical mass: the partnerships' budget (Union and partners' contributions) shall match their duration, ensuring sufficient resources to fund at least one substantial call per year, each comparable in size to an average Horizon Europe call in the relevant thematic area;

iii. partners' composition: unless duly justified, the participation of public entities***, including national and regional authorities,*** from at least five Member States ***or associated countries,*** and private entities representing substantial segments of their respective ecosystems is required, ensuring a broad and balanced involvement of key stakeholders ***and broad geographical representation across the Union, within their decisionmaking structures***;

(iiia) governance structures: partnerships shall include scientific advisory mechanisms ensuring that strategic orientation and priority setting are informed by recognised experts, including representatives from SSHA, where relevant;

iv. pan-European relevance: partnerships shall have pan-European relevance, reflected in a ***broad*** geographic***al representation*** of partners among Member States***, with particular attention to ensuring the meaningful participation of partners from widening countries and transition countries as referred to in Article 19 of this Regulation***;

v. mission-orientation: partnerships shall formulate clear, measurable, time-bound objectives ***that reflect clear R&I relevance, industrial competitiveness and societal impact goals*** within the***ir*** duration that will inform monitoring, assessment, and evaluation exercises;

(va) excellence-based implementation: partnerships shall ensure that calls for proposals are evaluated through independent, excellence-based peer-review procedures;

vi. ***implementation*** plan: partners shall develop a***n implementation*** plan exante, including a set of key performance indicators to track progress***, dissemination, exploitation and valorisation results*** and a forwardlooking transition strategy, including actions for phasing out from Horizon Europe funding***. The implementation plan should provide a strategic framework, while allowing for justified deviations where necessary, in order to respond to evolving scientific, technological, policy or market developments, subject to appropriate governance and monitoring arrangements***;

vii. openness and transparency: partnerships shall demonstrate openness***,*** transparency ***and non-discrimination*** regarding the identification of priorities and objectives – including expected results and impacts – and the engagement of partners and stakeholders across the entire value chain and from diverse sectors, backgrounds, and disciplines, including***, where relevant, the systematic integration of SSHA across their Strategic Research, Innovation and Deployment Agendas (SRIDAs) and including*** relevant international ones without affecting European competitiveness ***and research security***;

viii. legacy: in cases where candidate partnerships build on predecessor initiatives, the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of previous partnerships shall be demonstrated;

(viiia) synergies: partnerships shall build synergies while ensuring no significant overlapping with other elements of this Programme or other Union Programmes.

(7b) Throughout their implementation, European Partnerships shall ensure:

i. internal transparent governance arrangements and rules ***based on common guidelines***, including codes of conduct ***and conflict-of-interest rules*** that ensure ***accountability and public oversight and*** their functioning in an open and transparent manner ***involving all partners***;

ii. continuous openness of the initiative through clear and transparent accession and exit criteria, including through open calls to potential new partner organisations ***and the engagement of partners and stakeholders from diverse sectors and disciplines, including innovative startups, scale-ups, small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), public research organisations, universities, non-profit entities and relevant international ones with due regard to overall security limitations, as well as economic and research security;***

iii. flexibility through timely revisions of key documents such as the SRI***D***As and transition strategies, adapted as necessary to ensure relevance and feasibility;

iv. continuous monitoring shall include tracking progress towards a set of partnership-specific common indicators including partner contributions, cost efficiency, and openness to new partners***, in particular, tracking progress towards broadening the geographical representation in the partner composition over the partnership's lifetime***. Partnershipspecific common indicators shall build on the common indicators as defined under Regulation XXX [*reference to Performance Regulation*] and set out in the biennial monitoring reports on the performance of European partnerships under Horizon Europe 2021-2027***. Every two years, the Commission shall submit a consolidated report on the performance, added value and portfolio coherence of all European Partnerships to the European Parliament and to the Council***;

(iva) startup, scale-up and SME integration: partnerships shall ensure the creation of clear strategies to involve innovative startups, scale-ups and SMEs in the innovation cycle, where relevant, taking into account their specific needs and challenges, and securing their meaningful role in delivering on the partnership's objectives.

(7c) The Commission shall inform the European Parliament and the Council of the evaluation process and identification, selection, establishment, modification, renewal or termination of European Partnerships in a timely manner. Any decision on the renewal or extension of a European Partnership shall be preceded by an independent evaluation, whose outcome shall be transmitted to the European Parliament and to the Council.

(7d) The Commission shall consult all stakeholders, including Member States and, where possible, associated countries and relevant stakeholders in the process of proposing new partnerships, starting from the early stages.

(7e) European Partnerships shall launch their final calls before 31 December 2034. European Partnerships shall determine and implement the best mode of transition ***to ensure the continuity of public-interest research and avoid the disruption of public research capacities***. Taking into account the transition strategies prepared ex-ante, partnerships shall undergo an independent assessment determining whether their objectives have been met, the suitability of the partnership approach, and their continued relevance for the Union's policy priorities. This assessment ***shall*** include a recommendation for the most effective policy intervention mode for any future actions. ***It shall be transmitted to the European Parliament and to the Council.***

(7f) In the absence of renewal, European Partnerships shall implement appropriate measures based on their phasing-out actions identified in their transition strategies***, while ensuring that public-funded knowledge, infrastructure and results remain accessible and in the public interest***.

Article 11a

European moonshots

1. ***In order to foster more ambitious, R&I-based solutions for the Union's most pressing societal and technological challenges, European mission-oriented moonshots ("moonshots") shall be initiated and funded under this Regulation.***

2. ***A moonshot shall aim to achieve an ambitious societal or technological R&I objective. It shall consist of research activities, which shall be overseen and managed by a Lead Expert and which shall have a bottom-up approach which starts with open calls for proposals that can contribute to achieving the Moonshot and which creates the basis for the development of a portfolio of projects through subsequent more targeted calls that create a pathway towards achieving the objective.***

3. ***A moonshot shall aim to achieve an ambitious societal or technological R&I objective. It shall consist of research activities, which shall be overseen and managed by a Lead Expert. The research activities shall have a bottom-up approach and shall start with open calls for proposals that can contribute to achieving moonshots. The bottom-up research activities shall create the basis for the development of a portfolio of projects through subsequent more targeted calls that create a pathway towards achieving the objective.***

4. ***A moonshot shall include dedicated activities for the engagement of citizens, stakeholders or both. Such engagement shall contribute to directing the implementation of the moonshot. In particular, citizens or stakeholder panels may be invited to review the outcomes of portfolio projects, to reflect on the appropriateness and desirability of the direction the Lead Expert wants to give to the moonshot, to provide feedback on draft texts for targeted calls, or to any other form of interaction with the projects and the Lead Expert that contributes to broader support for the moonshots and the solutions it is developing.***

5. ***The initiation of a moonshot shall take the form of a dedicated part of the Work Programme as referred to in Article 11b(3). This part shall set out:***

    a. ***The objective of the moonshot, established in accordance with the SMARTmethodology;***

    b. ***The budgetary commitments from the Union budget, including from which Window(s) the commitments shall be drawn;***

    c. ***Where appropriate, the budgetary commitments from the Member States and the private sector needed to achieve the objective;***

    d. ***The call for expressions of interest for the initial Lead Expert(s) responsible for leading the moonshot.***

    e. ***Where appropriate, any planned legislative or non-legislative initiatives which has been or is expected to be initiated in parallel with the moonshot in order to ensure the policy and regulatory framework supports the achievement of the objective of the moonshot.***

Article 11b

Work programmes

1. The Specific Programme shall be implemented by the work programmes referred to in paragraph***s*** 2 ***and 3*** of this Article in accordance with Article 110 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509.

   Without prejudice to the first subparagraph, the work programmes may in particular set out:

   a) ***an indication of the*** associated budget ***allocated to each general thematic priority, action and mission and an indicative implementation timetable***;

   b) ***the applicable*** eligibility and award criteria ***among those set out in the Articles 21 and 25***;

   c) ***the funding*** rate***s*** per action;

   d) ;

   e) actions to which specific rules apply, in particular on ***research security,*** ownership of results, valorisation and dissemination, transfer and licensing as well as access rights to results***;***

   (ea) the intended coverage of Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) and the planned use of research and technology infrastructures, including access conditions, to ensure balanced support across lower and higher TRLs and effective pathways towards testing, validation, and market and societal adoption;

   (eb) an evaluation procedure.

2. The Commission shall adopt separate work programmes, by means of implementing acts, for the implementation of actions under the following components, as set out in Article ***4***:

   a) the European Research Council (ERC), for which the draft work programme shall be established by the ERC Scientific Council under Article 7(4)(a)(ii), in accordance with Article ***11c***(3) ***based solely on the award criteria of excellence***. The Commission shall depart from the draft work programme established by the ERC Scientific Council only in accordance with Article ***12a***(***3***) ***of this Regulation***, second subparagraph; in that case, the Commission shall adopt the work programme by means of an implementing act in accordance with Article ***11c***(4); ***and shall inform the ERC Scientific Council, the European Parliament and the Council of its*** duly motivate***d departure from the draft work programme established by the ERC Scientific Council***;

   b) the European Innovation Council (EIC), for which the work programme shall be prepared following the ***recommendation*** of the EIC Board under Article 1***6a***(1)(b), in accordance with Article ***11c***(4);

   c) Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)***, European support for Researchers at risk, Fast Track to Excellence***, ***in accordance with Article 11c(4)***;

   ca) Fast Track to Innovation, in accordance with Article 11c(4);

   d) innovation ecosystems, reforming and enhancing the European R&I system, research and technology infrastructures, widening participation and ERA integration, in accordance with Article ***11c***(4);

   e) the JRC, for which the multi-annual work programme shall take into account the opinion provided by the Board of Governors of the JRC referred to in Commission Decision 96/282/Euratom.

3. ***The Commission shall, after receiving advice from the High-Level Council in accordance with Article 15a(3)a, adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 34a, supplementing***

this Regulation in respect of the adoption of work programmes, covering a period of three years where each first year of the work programme shall coincide with the last year of the previous work programme for the implementation of all Windows under Pillar II 'Competitiveness and Society'.

3a. The work programmes shall ensure that all activities supported under this Programme are consistent with the civilian nature and the specific objectives of the Framework Programme, in accordance with Article 3 of this Regulation.

Article 11c

Committee procedure

1. The Commission shall be assisted by a committee. That committee shall be a committee within the meaning of Regulation (EU) No 182/2011.
2. The committee may convene in the following configurations, having regard to the subject matter to be discussed:
    - General configuration: overview of the implementation of the Programme;
    - ERC;
    - MSCA;
    - ***Fast Track to Excellence***
    - ***European Support for Researchers at Risk***
    - ***One configuration for each Window under Pillar II, including the Competitiveness Windows, Society Windows and Horizontal Window;***
    - ***Fast Track to Innovation***
    - EIC and innovation ecosystems;
    - Research and technology infrastructures;
    - Reforming and enhancing the European R&I system and widening participation and ERA integration.

(2a) Joint meetings with [ECF Programme Committee] shall be convened on a regular basis to ensure alignment on European priorities, based on substantive deliberations and documentation, enabling effective coordination, alignment of Work Programmes and, where appropriate, joint strategic planning.

3. Where reference is made to this paragraph, Article 4 of Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 shall apply.
4. Where reference is made to this paragraph, Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 182/2011 shall apply.
5. Where the opinion of the committee is to be obtained by written procedure, that procedure shall be terminated without result when, within the time-limit for delivery of the opinion, the chair of the committee so decides or a simple majority of committee members so request.
6. In accordance with international agreements concluded by the Union, representatives of ***associated*** countries ***shall*** be invited as observers in the meetings of ***all relevant*** Programme committee***s of the Programme parts they are associated to and*** under the conditions laid down in its rules of procedure, taking into account security and public order of the Union or

its Member States. ***Representatives of international organisations may be invited as observers to all such relevant meetings under the same conditions.***

(6b) For the purposes of this Regulation, the committee configurations related to the Windows in Pillar II shall act also as the expert group supporting the Commission in the preparation of the delegated acts for the adoption of the Work Programmes for the Windows. Each configuration shall act as the expert group for the delegated act of the Window for which the configuration is related.

Chapter II Excellent

Science

Article 12

European Research Council

1. The Commission shall establish a European Research Council (the 'ERC') to implement the actions under Pillar I 'Excellent Science' of this Chapter which relate to the ERC. The ERC shall succeed the European Research Council set up by Council Decision (EU) 2021/764.

(2a) The ERC shall be composed of the independent ERC Scientific Council provided for in Article ***12a*** and the ERC dedicated implementation structure provided for in Article ***12b***.

(2b) The ERC Scientific Council shall have a President ('ERC President') who shall be chosen from among senior and internationally respected scientists.

(2c) The ERC President shall be appointed by the Commission following a transparent recruitment process involving an independent dedicated search committee. The recruitment process and the candidate selected shall have the approval of the ERC Scientific Council. ***Prior to their appointment, the selected candidate shall appear at a public hearing before the European Parliament. The Commission shall take due account of the views expressed by the European Parliament, without prejudice to the Commission's power of appointment.*** The term of office of the ERC President shall be limited to ***four*** years, extendable once.

(2d) ***The ERC President shall devote the majority of their working time to ERC business. Their place of work shall be in Brussels for the duration of the appointment and they shall be renumerated at a level commensurate with the Commission's senior officials proportionate to the time dedicated. The ERC dedicated implementation structure shall ensure the ERC President has sufficient financial and human resources, in order to enable them to sufficiently carry out their functions. The Commission shall propose the necessary budgetary resources for the ERC when preparing the draft general budget of the Union.***

(2e) The ERC shall operate according to its core principles which are scientific excellence, open science, autonomy, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability and research integrity. It shall ensure continuity with ERC actions conducted under Council Decision (EU) 2021/764.

(2f) The Commission shall act as the guarantor of the autonomy and integrity of the ERC and shall ensure the proper execution of the tasks entrusted to it.

(2g) The Commission shall ensure that the implementation of ERC actions is in accordance with the principles set out in paragraph ***2e***of this Article ***and Article 6(3) of Decision (EU)***

…/… Specific Programme] as well as with the overall strategy ***procedures and positions of*** the ERC, referred to in Article ***12a***(***3***), established by the ERC Scientific Council.

Article 12a

ERC Scientific Council

1. The ERC Scientific Council shall be composed of 22 independent scientists, engineers and scholars of the highest repute and with the appropriate expertise, ***gender and generational balance***, a diversity of research areas and a ***broad*** geographical ***representation across the Union***. They shall act in their personal capacity, independent of extraneous interests. The members of the ERC Scientific Council shall be appointed by the Commission, following an independent and transparent procedure for their identification agreed with the ERC Scientific Council, including an open consultation of the scientific community and a report to the European Parliament and the Council.
2. The term of office for members of the ERC Scientific Council shall be ***limited*** to four years, ***renewable*** once by up to two years, based on a rotating system which shall ensure the continuity of the work of the ERC Scientific Council, ***including through the staggered replacement of one third of the members at regular intervals***.
3. The ERC Scientific Council shall exercise its tasks ***autonomously,*** solely and exclusively within the scope and for the purposes of the Specific Programme. In that context, it shall establish:
   a) the overall strategy for the ERC;
   b) the work programme for the implementation of the ERC activities;
   c) the methods and procedures for peer review and proposal evaluation on the basis of which the proposals to be funded are determined ***and, where appropriate, the introduction of elements of blind evaluation for individual research grants, in accordance with which research proposals may be evaluated without considering the person and geographical base of the applicant and the research institution they belong to***;
   d) its position on any matter which from a scientific perspective may enhance the achievements and impact of the ERC and the quality of the research carried out ***and the implementation of ERC actions, including reference documents, guidelines and IT systems, manuals and instructions***;
   e) a code of conduct covering, among other matters, the avoidance of conflicts of interest;
   f) the procedure for the election of the ERC Vice-Presidents.

   The Commission shall depart from the positions established by the ERC Scientific Council in accordance with the first subparagraph only if it considers that this Regulation has not been respected. In that case, the Commission shall adopt measures to maintain continuity in the implementation of the Specific Programme and the achievements of its objectives, setting out and duly motivating the points of departure from the ERC Scientific Council positions, ***informing the European Parliament and the Council***
4. The ERC Scientific Council is the guarantor of the quality of the activity from the scientific perspective and has full authority over decisions on the type of research ***and grant schemes*** to be funded.

5. The ERC Scientific Council shall act exclusively in the interest of the ERC, according to the principles set out in Article ***12***(***2e***). It shall act with integrity and probity and carry out its work efficiently and with the greatest possible transparency. ***There shall be no constraints on the ability of its members to communicate with the academic sector, Member States, all Union institutions, and any other relevant persons or entities***.

Article 12b

ERC dedicated implementation structure

1. The ERC dedicated implementation structure ***shall*** follow strictly, efficiently and with the necessary flexibility the objectives and requirements of the ERC alone. To fulfil its responsibilities as set out in Articles ***12*** and ***12a*** and in this Article, in the context of its own responsibilities for budget execution, the Commission shall:

   (a) ensure the ***autonomy,*** continuity and renewal of the ERC Scientific Council and provide support for a standing Identification Committee for the identification of future ERC Scientific Council members;

   (b) ensure the continuity of the ERC dedicated implementation structure and the delegation of tasks and responsibilities to it, ***based on the recommendations*** of the ERC Scientific Council;

   (c) ensure that the ERC dedicated implementation structure carries out the full range of its tasks and responsibilities;

   (ca) ensure that the tasks and responsibilities of the ERC dedicated implementation structure are not delegated to any other body or structure and ensure that the ERC dedicated implementation structure is not assigned tasks and responsibilities related to other parts of the Programme except as otherwise explicitly provided for in this Regulation;

   (d) appoint the Director and the members of the management of the ERC dedicated implementation structure, ***following a transparent and non-discriminatory selection procedure agreed with*** the ERC Scientific Council;

   (e) ensure the timely adoption of the ERC work programme, the positions regarding implementing methodology and the necessary implementing rules including the ERC rules of submission and the ERC model grant agreement, ***in agreement with*** the ERC Scientific Council;

   (ea) regularly and in a timely manner inform and consult the ERC programme committee on the implementation of the ERC activities

   (f) monitor the ERC dedicated implementation structure and evaluate its performance.

Article 13

Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions

1. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions shall support the ***research*** career at all stages, skills development, and mobility of researchers from all over the world subject to ***research*** security considerations ***with a specific focus on early-career researchers***. MSCA shall foster ***bottom-up*** research excellence, attract and retain excellent research talents, and support sustainable research careers in the Union with the aim to increase the Union's

scientific excellence, thus contributing to competitiveness in ***R&I***, ***without any directionality in calls***.

2. The MSCA shall fund excellent doctoral networks, post-doctoral fellowships, R&I staff exchanges, as well as support mechanisms to foster sustainable careers in view of attracting and retaining the most promising talents. A strong focus shall be put on international, intersectoral and inter-disciplinary cooperation ***across all research fields, including social sciences, humanities and arts,*** as well as science outreach. The funding shall support cutting edge research and focus on developing research talent, with targeted support for early career researchers. It shall support to establish the Union as a leading destination for researchers.

Article13a Fast Track to Excellence

1. The Fast Track to Excellence scheme shall support small-scale, curiosity-driven collaborative research activities to foster excellent research. It shall support researchers across the Union in moving the frontier of science by exploring new avenues of collaboration across borders, and where appropriate facilitate multidisciplinarity.

2. The Fast Track to Excellence scheme shall be implemented through a continuously open call for proposals and it shall support research projects with a budget of up to EUR 2 000 000 with a duration of up to 2 years.

3. For the evaluation of the submitted proposals, the Fast Track to Excellence scheme shall follow the structure of the peer review system referred to in Article 12a(3)(c) with regard to the panels of scientific experts. Broad geographical representation in those panels shall be ensured.

Article 13b

European Support for Researchers at Risk

1 ***The Programme shall offer discipline- and country-agnostic support to researchers at risk. This support shall include a European Fellowship Scheme which shall provide funding for the placement of researchers at risk at eligible European entities. This may include remote or hybrid placements. Only at risk researchers shall be eligible for the Fellowship scheme. Fellowships shall be allocated to at risk researchers based on their scientific excellence.***

2. The Programme shall also contribute to the strengthening of support for researchers at risk across the Union by supporting coordination and promotion of national action, and contributing to improving the framework conditions for researchers at risk.

3. Given the specific expertise and skills needed for its effective implementation, the support of the Programme for researchers at risk as set out in this Article shall be implemented with the involvement of organisations with proven expertise in the field. The form of implementation shall be chosen to provide a long-term commitment from the Union to the implementation of the activities under this Article and shall not require annual or multiannual funding applications. Where appropriate, it may be implemented under indirect management.

Article 14

Joint Research Centre

1. The Joint Research Centre shall provide independent, evidence-based knowledge and science, supporting EU policies ***and policy development*** to positively impact society. This shall be undertaken through JRC direct actions and through participation of the JRC in indirect actions. Chapter II of Title II shall not apply to direct actions. By way of derogation from Article 21(3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, the revenues or amounts resulting from the JRC's research activities (e.g. patents, licenses etc) shall be reusable by the JRC.

Chapter III

Competitiveness and Society

Article 15

Collaborative research

1. Collaborative research shall support the creation of transnational ***R&I cooperation*** networks, bringing together entities of different disciplines, to support the development and swift diffusion of ***excellent*** results in favour of the Union's industrial competitiveness ***and society***, and to strengthen the impact of research in developing and supporting Union policies.
2. Activities shall be carried out in a balanced manner between lower and higher Technology Readiness Levels, thereby covering the whole value chain. ***Grant-based research actions under this article shall take the form of Research Actions, Research & Innovation Actions or Innovation Actions.***
3. ***The*** Programme shall***, under the Competitiveness Windows of Pillar II,*** include the collaborative ***R&I*** activities in ***support*** of the competitiveness of the European ***economy and undertakings by fostering innovation and contributing to the attractiveness of the Union as a location for startups to scale***.
4. The Programme shall***, under the Society Windows of Pillar II,*** support activities to tackle global societal challenges ***especially*** in the areas of ***social sciences, humanities and the arts, including*** strengthening democratic values and tackling disinformation, including rule of law and fundamental rights, ***Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference ,media pluralism as well as civic participation and trust in science***; promoting socioeconomic transformations that contribute to inclusion and growth***;*** addressing demographic and intergenerational challenges, including from a youth ***and gender*** perspective ***as well as*** migration management and integration of migrants***; addressing challenges related to environment, climate, the sustainable use of natural resources, biodiversity and food safety; sustaining European cultures and cultural heritage and strengthening cultural and creative industries***.

4a. The collaborative research activities referred to in paragraphs 3, 4, 5(a) and 5(b) shall be implemented in a manner that fosters multidisciplinary and cross-window collaboration where necessary to address complex scientific, technological and societal challenges. The implementation of the Windows shall ensure synergies between the Competitiveness and Society Windows of the Programme.

4b. The activities shall be implemented through the Work Programmes as referred to in Article 11b(3) These Work Programmes shall establish general thematic priorities within each Window and the budget available for each priority and call.

5. The Programme ***shall*** contribute to ***several horizontal initiatives under a Horizontal Window. This Window shall support the following activities:***

   a) Missions through ***funding for R&I activities as part of*** the Missions established under Article 8 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/695***. The funding shall*** be awarded on the basis of Work Programmes ***as referred to in Article 11b (3)*** covering up to the budgetary year 2030.

   b) The R&I component of the New European Bauhaus Facility***, including energy efficiency and decarbonisation of buildings shall contribute to increasing Europe's housing stock in line with the New European Bauhaus principles. The funding shall*** be awarded on the basis of Work Programmes ***as referred to in Article 11b(3).***

   c) ***Metrology research as part of an Article 185 TFEU Partnership on Metrology.***

   d) ***A pilot action on Sectoral Plans. The funding shall*** be awarded on the basis of Work Programmes ***as referred to in Article 11b (3).***

Article15a

High-Level Council for collaborative R&I

1. By … [six months after the entry into force of this Regulation] the Commisison shall establish a High Level Council which shall provide strategic advice to the Commission on the orientation of Pillar II, , including the definition of thematic priorities, areas for the establishment of Partnerships and the allocation of resources between collaborative and bottom-up instruments, with a sufficiently broad composition to cover a broad range of disciplines, including SSHA, relevant sectors and broad geographic diversity.

2. The Council referred to in paragraphs 1 shall consist of at least 30 Members. Those Members shall be independent experts coming from science, innovation, industry and civil society, of the highest repute and appropriate expertise ensuring a diversity of research areas, broad geographical diversity and gender balance. The selection of the Members shall be carried out through an open and transparent procedure, based on clearly defined selection criteria published in advance. The European Parliament and

the Council shall be duly informed of the selection process and its outcome. Members of the High-Level Council shall be appointed by the Commission for up to four years, renewable ***once with a rolling appointments system so that members are appointed on a regular basis,*** in their personal capacity, independently of any extraneous interests, and shall not represent any institution, sector, or Member State**.** Members shall declare any interest which might be considered prejudicial to their independence.

The Members of the Council shall be appointed within six months after the entry into force of this Regulation. The setting-up of the High-Level Council for Collaborative R&I shall be without prejudice to the swift start of the Programme.

3. The High-Level Council shall:

(a) Advise the Commission and the relevant Member States' experts referred to in Article 34a(4) on the general thematic priorities for the Work Programmes implementing the Pillar II, thematic areas for the establishment of Partnerships,

and on the thematic profiles of the Lead Experts to be recruited by the Commission. This advisory role may include the participation of at least one Member of the Council in the expert group meetings in which the preparation of the Work Programme is being discussed, as observer.

(b) ensure its advice reflects the objectives of the Programme and is based on a balanced consideration of scientific excellence, European competitiveness, societal needs and long-term research priorities, and act with integrity and probity and carry out its work efficiently and with transparency.

(c) advise on and be proactively involved by the Commission in the process of recruitment of the Lead Experts in particular by providing its expertise to the selection committee.

(d) be allowed to prepare recommendations on the draft calls that shall be transmitted to the relevant Programme Committee in due time

For decisions regarding the implementation of Pillar II until … [six months after the date of entry into force of this Regulation], the application of this paragraph shall not be mandatory in the absence of the establishment of the High-Level Council.

4. The Commission shall adopt a code of conduct for members of the High-level Council including clear rules on conflicts of interest, transparency and independence, and ensuring the integrity of the Programme's decision-making processes. These rules shall strictly prohibit former and current members of the High-Level Council from participating, whether directly or indirectly, in the calls for proposals or any competitive procedures opened, closed, decided on or discussed during their tenure in the Highlevel Council. Compliance with those rules shall be subject to appropriate monitoring and oversight mechanisms.

Article15b

Lead Experts

1. For each general thematic priority established in the Work Programmes in accordance with Article 15(4b), the Commission shall recruit at least one Lead Expert to lead the implementation of the thematic priority. The Lead Expert shall be supported by a team of officials with scientific and/or innovation experience relevant to the thematic priority, in particular national seconded experts with relevant experience.

1a. The thematic priority shall be implemented through regular calls for proposals addressing specific call topics within the scope of the thematic priority as set out in the Work Programmes. The calls for proposals shall be published according to an indicative timetable set out in the Work Programmes. The timetable shall include indicative timings for when call topics may be opened and closed. Where in the implementation of the thematic priority the Commission decides to deviate from the indicative timetable, it shall as soon as possible and proactively communicate these changes publicly. The Lead Experts shall prepare and update every six months an overview with call topics for each call to be opened in the next 18 months in accordance with the indicative timetable, to be published by the Commission.

2. The Lead experts shall be responsible for the development and monitoring of the calls within their field of expertise and shall submit the draft call topic texts to the Programme Committee. The Lead Expert with support of the expert team shall consult the relevant community of stakeholders in a broad, inclusive, structured and transparent manner to develop the draft call topic texts. The draft call topic text shall be discussed in a Programme Committee meeting in which the relevant Lead Expert shall participate. During the Programme Committee meeting, the Lead Expert shall present the draft text and explain the rationale behind it. The Commission shall take into consideration the recommendation from the High-level Council when adopting the call topic texts.

3. The Commission shall adopt each call topic text by means of implementing acts in accordance with Article 11c(4). Each implementing act shall set out if and how the restrictions under Article 22b of this Regulation is to be applied to a specific call topic. Once the call topic text is published, the Lead Expert and other Commission officials who contributed to its drafting shall proactively and responsively exchange with stakeholders on the text exclusively through a formally structured and publicly documented consultation procedures.

4. Lead Experts shall be recruited by the Commission as temporary agents pursuant to Article 2(f) of the Staff Regulations They shall be engaged through open calls for expressions of interest published by the Commission together with the Work Programme. Lead Experts shall be persons of high scientific or research standing in appropriate disciplines with extensive demonstrated expertise in the field corresponding to the relevant thematic priority.

Eligibility and selection criteria shall be established in the calls for expressions of interest and shall include, as a minimum the following criteria:

(a) scientific expertise, from relevant disciplines, including where relevant social sciences, arts and humanities;

(b) track record of success in research and/or innovation;

(c) professional experience in the relevant thematic area;

(d) management skills

Where relevant, the Lead Expert shall also facilitate the exploitation of results from collaborative R&I, in particular towards the European Competitiveness Fund and where appropriate through the Specific Programme for defence R&I, and including through standardisation, synergies between projects and across pillars of the Programme.

5. Any measures under the [Staff Regulation] to prevent post-public employment conflicts of interest, in particular Article 16 and 17, shall fully apply to the Lead Experts after leaving their post. In the application of the Staff Regulation in this context, the Commission shall take into account the specific nature of this Programme.

Article15c Fast Track to Innovation

1. The Fast Track to Innovation scheme shall support small-scale, bottom-up collaborative innovation activities to foster excellent innovation in Europe and it shall be oriented towards activities with relevance for industrial competitiveness. It shall support researchers and innovators exploring new avenues of collaboration across borders, across disciplines and across sectors to foster innovation.

2. The Fast Track to Innovation scheme shall be implemented through a continuously open call for proposals and it shall support research projects with a budget of up to EUR 2 000 000 with a duration of up to two years

Article 15d

Pilot Initiative for Sectoral Plans

1. In order to explore the preparation of Sectoral Plans as a specific modality for implementing collaborative R&I activities under Pillar II through long-term, bottom-up and excellence-based collaboration, the Commission shall establish a pilot action for the SSHA sector which shall be implemented in accordance with Article 11k of [Horizon Specific Programme].

2. If that pilot action is successfully implemented and evaluated in accordance with Article 11k of Decision (EU) …/… Specific Programme], the Programme may support the establishment of an SSHA Sectoral Plan within [6 months] after the finalisation of the evaluation. The Commission may also assess the feasibility of extending this modality to other scientific sectors.

Chapter IV

Innovation

Article 16

The European Innovation Council

-1a. The Commission shall establish a European Innovation Council (the 'EIC') to implement the actions under Chapter IV 'Innovation' of this Title as well as under Chapter IV of Decision (EU) …/… [Specific Programme] which relate to the EIC.

-1b. The EIC shall be composed of the independent EIC Board provided for in Article 16a, the EIC dedicated implementation structure provided for in Article 16b and the EIC Fund provided for in Article 16c.

1. The EIC shall identify, develop and scale up deep tech and disruptive innovation from research to scale-up. It shall be implemented mainly through open bottom-up calls for proposals while ensuring a balanced portfolio of actions across thematic areas. This shall be complemented by targeted thematic and 'Challenge' calls ***for proposals developed by Programme Managers*** in areas of potential strategic interest in close coordination and synergy with the ECF policy windows, ***and in synergy*** with the ECF InvestEU Instrument.

1a. The EIC shall operate in accordance with the following core principles of agility, ability to take risk, clear Union added value, autonomy, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. It shall ensure continuity with EIC actions conducted under Council Decision (EU) 2021/76 as well as continuously develop and experiment with approaches fostering innovation in order to address changing needs of innovators or technological and global developments. The EIC activities shall be designed to support entrepreneurial endeavours of scientists, to keep up with increasing speed of innovation cycles and to align with operational standards in the venture capital market. The EIC shall develop agile and transparent procedures tailored to this approach to innovation funding, while respecting the need for accountability for the use of public funding.

2. The EIC ***shall*** provide the following types of support:

   (a) Pathfinder grants for high-risk, ***early and collaborative*** research, including proof of concept and prototyping;

   (b) Transition grants to develop pathways to commercial development for research results, including the creation of spin-offs and start-ups;

   (c) Accelerator blended finance and investment-only support for single companies to develop and bring to market their innovations***,*** with ***a particular focus on supporting women entrepreneurs, women founders and women CEOs including through dedicated support, including grant first and blended finance, for women innovators and women-led companies***;

   (d) Incentives to procurers to test and provide first customers for deep tech and disruptive innovations;

   (e) Business Accelerator Services to complement EIC funding by providing access, in complementarity and coordination with the Project Advisory referred to in Chapter III of the of the Regulation (EU) XXX [European Competitiveness Fund], to deep-tech expertise, coaching and mentoring, match making with investors, procurers, corporates and other innovation partners.

3. The types of support referred to in paragraph 2 shall be combined flexibly in EIC Challenges developed and overseen by EIC Programme Managers. EIC Challenges shall be implemented using a portfolio approach where actions are selected based on their complementarities to achieve defined objectives and interact with each other under the supervision of EIC Programme Manager.

Article 16a The European Innovation Council Board

1. The European Innovation Council Board (EIC Board) shall:

   (a) ***establish*** the overall strategy for the EIC component under ***Pillar*** III 'Innovation' of Horizon Europe, taking into account complementarities with the European Competitiveness Fund***, after consulting the European Commission***;

   (b) ***provide a recommendation to the Commission for*** the work programme for the implementation of the EIC actions, including criteria for assessment of proposals and the appropriate balance between the different types of funding support;

   (ba) provide the draft investment guidelines for the EIC Fund;

   (c) ***provide an assessment*** of emerging technology trends from EIC's portfolios, and strategic portfolios of projects;

(ca) establish the profile and portfolio of EIC Programme Managers; (cb) establish its position on European innovation policy.

2. The EIC Board shall act in the interest of achieving the objectives of the EIC. It shall act with integrity and probity and carry out its work efficiently and transparently. ***There shall be no constraints on the ability of its members to communicate with the world of deep tech innovation, Member States, all Union institutions, and any other relevant persons or entities.***

3. The EIC Board shall be composed of 15 to 20 independent high-level individuals drawn from various parts of Europe's ***research and*** innovation ecosystem, including entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, investors, innovation experts and researchers and technology transfer ***and knowledge valorisation*** experts. The EIC Board shall contribute to outreach actions and its members shall strive to enhance the prestige of the EIC brand.

4. The members of the EIC Board shall be appointed by the Commission, following an open call for nominations or for expressions of interest, and taking into account the need for balance in expertise, gender, age and ***broad*** geographical ***representation across the Union***.

5. Their term of office shall be limited to ***four*** years, renewable ***once with a rolling appointments system so that members are appointed on a regular basis***.

6. The EIC Board shall have a President who shall be a high-profile figure linked to the world of innovation, with a solid understanding of ***the knowledge continuum,*** developing innovati***ve solutions*** from ***frontier*** research to market and scale-up.

7. The ***Commission shall appoint the*** EIC Board President following a transparent recruitment process ***and after informing the European Parliament and the members of the EIC Board***.

   The term of office of the EIC Board President shall be limited to a maximum of ***four*** years, extendable once for up to ***four*** years. ***The EIC Board President shall be devoted full time to EIC business. Their place of work shall be in Brussels for the duration of the appointment and they shall be remunerated at a level commensurate with the Commission's senior officials.***

(7a) The Commission shall appoint EIC Programme Managers based on the profile and portfolio established by the EIC Board under paragraph 1(ca) of this Article, following a transparent, open and merit-based process, taking into account the need for balance in expertise across the thematic priorities set out in the EIC work programmes, gender, age and broad geographical representation across the Union. Their term of office shall be limited to a maximum of three years, renewable once. EIC Programme Managers shall exercise their functions within the EIC dedicated implementation structure referred to in Article 16b of this Regulation and Article 12a of the Decision (EU) …. [Specific Programme] and have sufficient operational discretion to exercise their functions independently.

(7b) Each Programme Manager shall be responsible for the design, development and oversight of one or more EIC Challenges as referred to in Article 16(1). In carrying out this responsibility, Programme Managers shall have the autonomy to steer the projects and the overall portfolio within their Challenges, including the authority to propose the selection, reorientation, acceleration or discontinuation of individual actions on the basis of their assessment of scientific, technological and market potential. The Commission shall ensure that the EIC dedicated implementation structure referred to in Article 16b of this Regulation and Article 12a of the Decision (EU) …. [Specific Programme] provides Programme Managers with the operational support and access to data necessary for the effective exercise of their functions.

Article 16b EIC dedicated implementation structure

1. *The Commission shall ensure that the EIC dedicated implementation structure follows efficiently and with the necessary flexibility the objectives and requirements of the EIC alone. To fulfil its responsibilities as set out in this Regulation and the Decision (EU) …. [Specific Programme], in the context of its own responsibilities for budget execution, the Commission shall:*

   (a) ensure the continuity and renewal of the EIC Board and provide support for a standing Identification Committee for the identification of future EIC Board members;

   (b) ensure the continuity of the EIC dedicated implementation structure and the delegation of tasks and responsibilities to it, based on the decisions of the EIC Board;

   (c) ensure that the EIC dedicated implementation structure carries out the full range of its tasks and responsibilities;

   (d) appoint the Director and the members of the management of the EIC dedicated implementation structure, following a transparent and non-discriminatory selection procedure agreed with the EIC Board;

   (e) ensure the timely adoption of the EIC work programme, the positions regarding implementing methodology and the necessary implementing rules including the EIC rules of submission and the EIC model grant agreement, taking into account the views of the EIC Board;

   (f) monitor the EIC dedicated implementation structure and evaluate its performance.

Article 16c EIC Fund

1. *EIC investment support provided under the EIC Accelerator referred to in Article 16(2) point c shall be implemented by a dedicated investment vehicle set up in accordance with the law of a Member State (the EIC Fund). The EIC Fund shall be structured in a way that it can attract other public or private investors in order to increase the leverage effect of the Union contribution.*

2. *The reflows from investments made by the EIC Fund or by the EIC Fund established by Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council shall return to the EIC Fund for reinvestment, in particular to be used to reduce the budgetary pressure of scale-up support on the Union budget.*

3. *The EIC Fund shall be implemented under indirect management. The Commission shall, on the basis of draft investment guidelines adopted by the EIC Board in accordance with Article 16a(1) point (ba), adopt investment guidelines for the EIC Fund by means of implementing acts in accordance with Article 11c(3). If the investment guidelines adopted by the Commission deviate from the draft investment guidelines adopted by the EIC Board, the Commission shall inform the EIC Board, the Parliament and the Council regarding the reasons for the deviation.*

4. *The EIC Fund shall establish a supervisory board in order to ensure adherence to the investment guidelines and proper functioning of the Fund in regards to EIC objectives. The supervisory board shall include at least the EIC Board President, another EIC Board Member, a representative of the Commission of the level of a Director-General, and the chair of the ECF InvestEU Investment Committee as referred to in Article … if Regulation (EU) …/,.. [European Competitiveness Fund].*

The supervisory board shall have full access to all information of the deal flow of all participants.The supervisory board shall under no circumstances play a role in the decision-making process on individual projects and investments.

5. The EIC Fund shall include a compartment dedicated to investing in women-led startups, which shall be managed by a dedicated fund manager with a specific focus on promoting female entrepreneurship.

Article 16d

European Innovation Council specific rules

1. ***Every year, a limited number of*** EIC Transition grants may be awarded without calls for proposals for the ***exclusive*** purpose of follow up funding for results generated by actions funded by the Programme ***or*** Horizon Europe Regulation No 695/2021.

2. The EIC Accelerator shall support only single beneficiaries and single investees who are SMEs, including startups, and ***innovative scaleups as defined in point (4) of the Annex to Commission Recommendation (EU) 2026/720[18], the definition of innovative enterprises, innovative startups and innovative scaleups. In duly justified cases to achieve the objectives set out paragraph 10 of this Article, EIC Accelerator support may be provided to innovative scaleups which do not comply with point 4(e) of the definition set out in that Annex.***

3. Proposals for EIC Accelerator actions may be submitted by one or more legal entities intending to establish or support a potential recipient, with the prior agreement of that recipient. If the selected for funding, the grant and investment agreement shall be signed only with that recipient.

4. In the case of blended finance actions, the beneficiary and the investee may differ in the sense that the investee may be the holding or the parent company of the beneficiary.

5. Funding bodies implementing Union Programmes, or national or regional programmes certified by the Commission, may directly submit a proposal for a EIC Transition or EIC Accelerator call, where such proposals stem from an action funded by the certified programme and subject to conditions set out in the EIC Work Programme (EIC Plug in).

5a. For the purpose of the certification process referred to in paragraph 5, the Commission shall adopt an implementing act in accordance with Article 11c(3) specifying the criteria and conditions that a programme shall comply with, in order to be part of the EIC Plug in. Those criteria and conditions shall ensure that the actions from which the proposals stem are likely to meet the same standards of excellence as actions under the Programme, as well as prevent that submissions to the EIC become a replacement for national support.

6. For the EIC Accelerator, the third evaluation criteria set out in Article 25(1) shall be replaced by the level of risk of the action, the quality and efficiency of the implementation, and the need for Union support. ***By way of derogation from Article. 153(2) of the Financial Regulation, the evaluation committee for EIC support shall be made up of at least two persons for preliminary evaluation steps preceding the final evaluation.***

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[18] ***Commission Recommendation (EU) 2026/720 of 18 March 2026 on the definition of innovative enterprises, innovative startups and innovative scaleups (OJ L, 2026/720, 24.3.2026, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2026/720/oj).***

7. Investments shall be made in non-bankable investees and jointly with co-investments by other private investors. However, where such support is not provided fully under the European Competitiveness Fund, support to bankable investees or without participation of other investors, may be provided in order to protect the Union's strategic interests.

8. By way of derogation from Article 212(2)(a) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, the conditions concerning economic viability, shall not apply to EIC Accelerator investment actions. ***By way of derogation from Article 201(4) of the Financial Regulation, the verification of financial capacity shall not apply to EIC Accelerator applicants.***

9. Blended finance actions shall be suspended, amended or, if duly justified, terminated if measurable milestones are not reached or if the beneficiary refuses the investment support without a duly justified reason.

10. The EIC Fund may award follow-on investments:

(a) if needed to protect the Union's strategic assets, interests, autonomy or security; or

(b) if subsequent funding rounds would not proceed or would proceed at significantly less favourable terms without EIC follow-on investment.

The EIC Work Programme may set out additional limitations regarding the award of follow-on support.

Article 17

Innovation Ecosystems

1. The Programme shall support organisations to create competitive, robust and connected innovation ecosystems and framework conditions***, such as Regional Innovation Valleys and Net-Zero Acceleration Valleys***. ***Ecosystem collaboration across value chains and common challenges, as well as s***ynergies with Union, national and regional programmes shall be pursued to this end.

2. The Programme shall support activities to foster the integration of the knowledge triangle – higher education, ***R&I***, and business – across the Union***, including through the Knowledge and Innovation Communities set up under Regulation (EU) …/… [EIT Regulation]***.

Chapter V

European Research Area

Article 18

European Research Area

1. The ***main*** objective of the European Research Area ('ERA') is to create a single, borderless market for research, innovation and technology across the Union, in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely. The Programme shall ensure the effective promotion and protection of values and principles of the ERA and the Pact for

research and innovation, notably ethics and integrity in ***research and innovation***, ***research security,*** freedom of scientific research and gender equality and equal opportunities, and the promotion of ***access to excellence, the free movement of knowledge and technology and*** attractive research careers and mobility.

2. The Policy Support Facility shall provide Member States and Associated Countries with practical expert support to design, implement and evaluate reforms that enhance the quality of their ***R&I*** investments, policies and systems ***and the systematic valorisation of the corresponding results, which may take the form of a multi-annual Research and Innovation Roadmap jointly developed with a Member State or an Associated Country***. It shall contribute to building stronger and more effective national ***R&I*** systems and a more robust European Research Area.

3a. The Research and Innovation Roadmap shall allow synergies with National and Regional Partnership Plans and with national and regional innovation programmes and may include the use of support measures under the Programme, including capacity building measures.

Article 18a

Research infrastructures

1. The Specific Programme shall***:***

   (a) support the construction, development***, modernisation*** and integration of ***excellent*** research infrastructures of Union interest ***to create real European added value by promoting scientific and technological excellence and frontier research through a well-connected ecosystem of world-leading research facilities and services;***

   (b) ***recognise and support small- and mid-sized research infrastructures that provide essential day-to-day services to researchers across all fields of research, underpin cutting-edge technological development, and offer access to external users at local, national and international level, including through funding, training, career development and transnational access to such infrastructures;***

   (c) ***ensure a balanced approach to the support of research infrastructures and technology infrastructures, covering all levels of technological readiness, including lower Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs), and strengthening the contribution of cutting-edge research infrastructures to early-stage and discovery-driven research;***

   (d) ***promote synergies and complementarities between research infrastructures and technology infrastructures in order to strengthen the continuum from fundamental research to market-ready innovation;***

   (e) ***leverage the expertise and road mapping work of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI).***

2. Research infrastructures activities shall focus on:

   (f) developing, consolidating and streamlining the Union landscape of research infrastructures, including coordination between the Union and national capacities***, such as by promoting synergies through the use of structural funds***

under the [NRPP Regulation] or the European Semester process and contributing up to 20% of the building ***and upgrading*** costs of critical new world-class capacities, ***while remaining strictly limited to research and innovation components***;

(aa) fostering joint investment strategies between Union, Member States and stakeholders from research community and industry to pool public and private funding;

(g) reinforcing transnational access to research infrastructures across domains and sectors, and adapting to new emerging user communities***, including from the private sector with a focus on SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups, ensuring flexible and simplified implementation***;

(ba) improving access, including through novel access mechanisms (virtual, secondary, clustered), and access support measures, such as training, expert technical support, and data services;

(bb) strengthening collaborations between thematic research infrastructures across Union;

(h) making research infrastructures more resilient***,*** sustainable ***and secure, with a view to research security and technological sovereignty objectives,*** while keeping pace with rapid technological advancements;

(i) developing a web of findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable (FAIR) and machine-actionable research data, including through expanding and consolidating the European Open Science Cloud as Europe's research data space ***and supporting the Union's capabilities for the long-term storage of research data, while ensuring appropriate frameworks for access and trusted collaboration of industry***;

(j) reinforcing European research infrastructure policy and international cooperation***;***

(ea) fostering complementarity between national and transnational research infrastructures and technology infrastructures;

(eb) supporting infrastructures relevant to SSHA and cultural heritage research.

Article 18b

Technology infrastructures

1. The Specific Programme shall improve technology infrastructure capacities in the Union and facilitate access to the integrated services of such infrastructures for ***stakeholders such as*** innovative companies, including ***innovative*** start-ups and scale-ups***, while ensuring that access for other research and innovation actors including public research organisations, universities and non-profit entities is also facilitated. Support shall be provided to precommercial research and innovation components, including development, testing and piloting of new technologies, as well as contributing up to 20% of the building and updating costs of critical new world-class capacities, while remaining strictly limited to research and innovation components, with all activities for the deployment and scaling up of technology infrastructures falling under instruments of the European Competitiveness Fund and other Union programmes***.

1a. The Specific Programme shall promote synergies and complementarities between research infrastructures and technology infrastructures in order to strengthen the continuum from fundamental research to market-ready innovation.

2. Activities shall focus on:

(-a) Developing, consolidating and streamlining the Union landscape of technology infrastructure***s, including coordination between the Union and national capacities***;

(a) Improving the visibility and uptake of technology infrastructure services;

(b) Access programme for SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups to technology infrastructures across the Union;

(c) Collaboration and networking among the infrastructures, training and upskilling of their staff.

(d) Reinforcing the European technology infrastructure policy***, which should promote and accelerate investments in those infrastructures***.

(2a) Technology infrastructures shall be jointly identified and agreed by the Union and Member States to support the alignment of Union and national strategic interests in an open, transparent and competitive process.

Article 19

Widening participation and ERA integration

-1. The objective of the 'Widening Participation and ERA Integration' part of the Programme aims at promoting further integration of all researchers across the Union in a well-functioning ERA. The Programme shall provide dedicated support to widening and transition countries to increase their participation in the Programme, including by fostering a broad geographical coverage in excellent collaborative projects, and their further integration in the ERA. Support shall be designed to build on the strengths and address the challenges of each category of Member States based on their R&I performance.

1. 'Widening countries' are Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia for the purposes of funding the actions under paragraph 5, points a) and b).

2. 'Transition countries' are Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia, for the purposes of funding the actions under paragraph 5, point b).

3. Only legal entities established in widening countries or transition countries shall be eligible as coordinators ***for activities supported under this Article***.

4. For associated countries, legal entities from the list of eligible countries as defined based on an indicator and published in the Work Programme shall be fully eligible as coordinators ***for activities*** under this ***Article***. Legal entities from outermost regions as defined in Article 349 TFEU shall be also eligible as coordinators ***for activities*** under this ***Article*** and shall be subject to the same rules applying to widening countries under this Article, with the exception of paragraph 7.

5. 'Widening' includes the following: (a) capacity building measures; (b) ***ERA integration*** measures.

6. The Programme shall assist widening and transition countries to increase their participation and to promote a broad geographical coverage in excellent collaborative projects. Those efforts shall be mirrored by proportional measures by Member States ***and shall also contribute to countering brain drain and supporting talent retention and circulation***.

7. From 2030 onwards access to capacity building measures is restricted to those widening countries that have increased their real expenditure of public investment in research and development in the latest known year compared to the year prior to it.

By way of derogation from the first subparagraph, the Commission may, upon a duly reasoned request by the Member State concerned, grant an exemption from this restriction for a calendar year where it establishes, primarily based on the findings of the European Semester, that exceptional macroeconomic or budgetary circumstances have materially affected the Member State's capacity to increase public investment in research and development for that particular calendar year.

7a. The Commission may specify in a call for proposals that in the case of proposals that receive the same score (ex aequo proposals) those proposals with a coordinator from a Transition Country shall be prioritised for funding. The Commission may include this element in no more than 30% of the calls under a single Work Programme. The Commission shall also justify the inclusion of the element based on data showing a need for further ERA integration in the area addressed by the call.

7b. Actions implemented under this Article that are intended to support participation in other parts of the Programme shall complement, and shall not prejudice, the excellence-based evaluation, selection and funding principles governing those other parts.

Title II - Rules for participation and dissemination

Chapter I

General provisions

Article 20

Experimentation

1. With the aim of maximising the Programme's impact and the effectiveness of the different activities it supports, the Programme shall provide a structured framework for targeted experimentation in the award and implementation of Union support, developing the necessary capabilities and allocating appropriate resources to test different approaches and generate robust evidence on their effectiveness, using experimental and quasi-experimental methods where appropriate.

2. The structured framework referred to in paragraph 1 shall include the involvement of external experts, in particular academic experts and experts from national or regional authorities, to supplement the expertise of the Commission with the aim of establishing within the Commission new and corresponding capacities. In particular, external experts shall be involved in the evaluation of experimentation as well as the validation of robust evidence about the effectiveness of experimental measures and their readiness for further rollout.

3. Under this experimentation clause, and subject to appropriate safeguards, the Commission may, on a case-by-case basis, designate certain actions or categories of actions to benefit from limited additions, derogations or exceptions from specific requirements laid down in this Regulation, the Financial Regulation or, exceptionally, other Union legislation related to the implementation of the Union budget, for the purpose of testing different approaches to implementing the Programme in a real-world environment for a limited period of time. Robust monitoring and evaluation arrangements, including where appropriate the involvement European Court of Auditors, shall accompany any such experimentation clauses in order to identify more effective ways to achieve the intended outcomes, helping to inform the assessment of future changes to the Programme. Such designations shall be made through the Work Programme.

4. Experimentation within the ERC or the EIC shall require the approval of the ERC Scientific Council for experimentation within the ERC or the EIC Board for experimentation within the EIC.

Article 21

Eligibility

1. Eligibility criteria shall be set to support achievement of the general and specific objectives laid down in Article 3, in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 and apply to all award procedures under the Programme.

1a. Any legal entity, regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non-associated third countries or international organisations, may participate in actions under the Programme, provided that the conditions laid down in this Regulation have been met together with any conditions laid down in the Work Programme or call for proposals in particular any conditions related to research security.

2. In award procedures under direct and indirect management one or more of the following categories of legal entities ***shall*** be eligible to receive Union support:

   (a) entities established in a Member State;

   (b) entities established in an associated third country;

   (c) other entities established in low to middle income non-associated third countries or, exceptionally, in other non-associated third countries if the third country is identified in the ***relevant call documents*** adopted by the Commission;

   (d) other entities established in non-associated countries where the funding of such entities is essential for implementing the action and contributes to the objectives laid down in Article 3.

3. Except when the ***relevant call documents*** otherwise provides, to be eligible for participation in grant actions legal entities shall form a consortium that includes as beneficiaries three legal entities independent of each other and each established in different countries as follows:

   (a) at least two legal entities established in different Member States; and

   (b) at least one other legal entity established in another Member State or an associated country.

4. ERC frontier research actions, EIC actions, research and training actions and actions that involve or have as their primary aim the implementation of pre-commercial procurement or procurement of innovative solutions, may be implemented by one or more legal entities,

provided that ***at least*** one of those legal entities shall be established in a Member State or associated country.

5. Coordination and support actions may be implemented by one or more legal entities, which may be established in a Member State, associated country or, in exceptional cases, in another third country.

6. In accordance with Article 136 of the Financial Regulation, eligibility restrictions shall apply to high-risk suppliers in line with EU law, for security reasons.

   International European research organisations***, international organisations with headquarters in a Member State or associated country,*** and legal entities created under Union law shall be deemed to be established in a Member State other than the ones in which other legal entities participating in the action are established.

   International organisations other than international European research organisations***, and other than international organisations with headquarters in a Member State or associated country,*** shall be deemed to be established in a non-associated third country, unless otherwise provided for in the Work Programme or the call for proposals.

7. In addition to Article 168(2) and (3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, associated third countries referred to in Article 9(1) and international organisations may, where relevant, participate in and benefit from any procurement mechanisms set out in Article 168(2) and (3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509. Rules applicable to Member States shall be applied, mutatis mutandis, to participating associated third countries and international organisations.

8. In award procedures, the following activities shall not be eligible for funding:

   (a) activities that are prohibited by Union law, applicable international law, or by national law in all Member States; activities that are already fully financed from other public or private sources, except contributions from the Union in the context of actions referred to in Article 8(1);

   (b) activities aiming at human cloning for reproductive purposes;

   (c) activities intended to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such modifications heritable, except research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads;

   (d) activities intended to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research, technological development and demonstration activities or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer;

   (e) research on human stem cells, both adult and embryonic, may be financed depending both on the contents of the scientific proposal and the legal framework of the Member States involved;

   For the purposes of the first subparagraph, point (a), no funding shall be provided in a Member State for research, technological or demonstration activity which is forbidden in that Member State.

9. In addition to the grounds set out in Article 132 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, award procedures and resulting legal commitments shall allow for termination where the objectives of the action are unlikely to be achieved at all or within the set timelines ***[...]***.

10. ***Where appropriate,*** the Work Programme or the documents related to the award procedure may specify the eligibility criteria set out in this Regulation ***[...],*** including to take into account specific policy requirements.

Article 22

Ethics and research integrity

1. Actions carried out shall comply with:

   (a) relevant Union, national and international law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Supplementary Protocols;

   (b) ethical principles, including the highest standards of research integrity.

2. For award procedures identified in the Work Programme ***or relevant call texts***, legal entities participating in an action shall fulfil all the following requirements:

   (a) provide an ethics self-assessment relating to the objective, implementation and likely impact of the activities, including a confirmation and description of compliance with paragraph 1;

   (b) provide a confirmation that the activities will comply with (i) the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, (ii) the Global Code of Conduct for Equitable Research Partnerships and that no activities excluded from funding will be conducted;

   (c) provide for activities carried out outside the Union, a confirmation that the same activities would have been allowed in a Member State;

   (d) provide for activities making use of human embryonic stem cells, as appropriate, details of licensing and control measures that shall be taken by the competent authorities of the Member States concerned as well as details of the ethics approvals that shall be obtained before the start of the relevant activities;

   (e) obtain all approvals or other mandatory documents from the relevant national, local ethics committees or other bodies, such as data protection authorities, before the start of the relevant activities and keep those documents on file to be provided to the Commission or the relevant implementation body upon request.

   (ea) ensure the responsible use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in research activities, in accordance with applicable Union law and ethical standards including the ERA Living guidelines on the responsible use of generative artificial intelligence in research;

Article 22a Evaluation review procedure, enquiries and complaints

(1) An applicant may request an evaluation review if it considers that the applicable evaluation procedure has not been correctly applied to its proposal. The Work Programmes shall provide for and detail the related procedure.

(2) Only the procedural aspects of an evaluation may be the subject of a request for an evaluation review. The evaluation of the merits of a proposal shall not be the subject of an evaluation review.

(3) An evaluation review shall not delay the selection process for proposals that are not the subject of that review.

(4) A request for an evaluation review shall relate to a specific proposal and shall be submitted within 30 days after the communication of evaluation results. It may result in:

(a) a re-evaluation of the proposal to be carried out primarily by evaluators who were not involved in the previous evaluation; or (b) confirmation of the initial evaluation.

(5) The Commission shall ensure the existence of a procedure for participants to make direct enquiries and complaints about their involvement in the Programme. Information on how to register enquiries or complaints shall be made available online.

Article 22b

Restrictions related to critical knowledge and technologies

1. ***Actions affecting critical knowledge or technology may be restricted in accordance with this Article. Those restrictions shall be duly justified and exceptional for each affected action individually and shall be based on the content of the action concerned. The application of restrictions shall ensure that no action contravenes the security and defence interests of the Union, as established in the framework of the common foreign and security policy pursuant to Title V TEU, and theMember States.***

2. ***In order to safeguard and protect the Union's autonomy and economic interests, the Work Programmes adopted pursuant to paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 11b, the implementing acts referred to in Article 15b(3) of this Regulation and the calls implementing the European Partnerships referred to in Article 11 of this Regulation may set out restrictions to participation in an action and dissemination or valorisation of results of an action which involves critical knowledge and technology. Those restrictions may take the form of:***

   (a) participation and performance restrictions requiring participating entities to be established, use facilities, or perform activities in the Member States, and where appropriate other eligible countries;

   (b) transfer restrictions requiring recipients of funding, during or within 5 calendar years after the end of an action, not to directly or indirectly transfer all or certain operations, results or related access and use rights, including granting of licences, from an eligible Member State or associated country to an ineligible third country with the possibility to reduce or recover, partially or fully, Union funding;;

   (c) control restrictions requiring recipients of funding to acquire or hold the ability to decide, without restrictions imposed by ineligible entities, on the creation and use of results, including the legal authority and practical capability to modify, substitute, or remove components of results that are subject to restrictions imposed by ineligible entities or third countries;

3. ***Award procedures affecting security, defence or public order, in particular concerning strategic assets and interests of the Union or the Member States may be restricted in accordance with Article 136 of the Financial Regulation. Those restrictions shall be exceptional and duly justified for each affected award procedure and may take the form of:***

   (a) as regards the participating entities, executive management structures restrictions and ownership and control restrictions limiting participation of all or certain entities to those entities with executive management structure, as well as ownership and control by natural or legal persons, established in the

Member States, trusted partners and where appropriate other eligible countries;

(b) as regards the implemented activities, place of performance, use of facilities, or equipment restrictions limiting the use for all or certain activities to those assets located or originating in the Member States, trusted partners and where appropriate other eligible countries, as well as limiting the eligibility of highrisk suppliers;

(c) as regards other security restrictions, security reviews and risks assessments, security clearances, transfer and access rights restrictions, including granting of licences to ensure appropriate safeguards for all or certain results and other information generated or used by the action.

This paragraph shall not apply to trusted partners.

4. ***By … [6 months after the adoption of the Regulation], the Commission shall adopt a delegated act in accordance with Article 34a of this Regulation to supplement this Regulaton by adopting a decision-making framework for the application of restrictions under this Article.***

That decision-making framework shall include considerations of the potential positive and negative impact of restrictions on the achievement of the objectives of the Programme, as well as on the Union's scientific leadership, global competitiveness, resilience, strategic autonomy, and security, and on the way to balance them. It shall also specify the duly justified and exceptional grounds for restricting the participation of legal entities established in associated countries designated as trusted partners, or the dissemination or valorisation of results in those countries.

Chapter II

Grants

Article 23

Calls for proposals

1. A call for proposals is not required for coordination and support actions which:
   (a) are to be carried out by legal entities identified in the Work Programme; and
   (b) do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals, in accordance with Article 198, point (e), of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509.
2. Information concerning the application and the evaluation ***of proposals receiving the Seal of Excellence*** may be shared with interested financing authorities, subject to the conclusion of confidentiality agreements unless explicitly objected by the applicant.

Article 24

Financial capacity of applicants

1. In addition to the exceptions mentioned in Article 201(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, the financial capacity shall be verified only if the requested funding from the Union for the action is equal to or greater than EUR 1.000 000.
2. Notwithstanding paragraph 1, if there are grounds to doubt the financial capacity of an applicant, or if there is a higher risk due to the participation in several ongoing actions funded by Union R&I programmes, the financial capacity of other applicants, or of coordinators even where the requested funding is below the threshold referred to in paragraph 1 shall also be verified.
3. If the financial capacity is structurally guaranteed by another legal entity, the financial capacity of that other legal entity shall be verified.
4. In the case where the financial capacity of an applicant is weak, the participation of the applicant may be made conditional on provision of a declaration on joint and several liability by an affiliated entity.
5. The contribution to the Mutual Insurance Mechanism set out in Article 30 shall be considered to be a sufficient guarantee under Article 155 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509. No additional guarantee or security shall be accepted from beneficiaries or imposed upon them.

Article 25

Award criteria and selection

1. A proposal shall be evaluated on the basis of the following award criteria:
   (a) excellence;
   (b) impact;
   (c) quality and efficiency of the implementation.
2. The Work Programme ***or call texts*** shall lay down details concerning the application of the award criteria referred to in paragraph 1***, including any weighting, thresholds and where relevant rules for dealing with ex aequo proposals, taking into consideration the objectives of the call for proposals. The conditions for dealing with ex aequo proposals may include criteria regarding SMEs and gender equality as well as the criterion set out in Article 19(7a).***
3. By derogation from paragraph 1, only the excellence criterion referred to in point (a) of that paragraph shall apply for evaluations under ERC frontier research actions and research and training actions, ***the Fast Track to Excellence scheme, Fellowships for Researchers at Risk, the Pilot initiative for an SSHA Sectoral Plan as well as calls for ERA Fellowships.***

Article 26

Time-to-grant

1. By way of derogation from the first subparagraph of Article 197(2) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, the following periods shall apply:
   (d) for informing all applicants of the outcome of the evaluation of their application, a maximum period of ***18 weeks*** from the final date for submission of complete proposals;

(e) for signing grant agreements with applicants, a maximum period of ***30 weeks*** from the final date for submission of complete proposals.

1a. After informing all applicants of the outcome of the evaluation of their application as referred to in paragraph 1, point (a), but before signing grant agreements with applicants as referred to in paragraph 1, point (b), the Commission shall reply to the substance of any communication from a consortium or one of its members within five working days of receipt of that communication. The Commission officials responsible for the implementation of a particular project shall arrange to meet the applicants within the first week of that period.

2. The Work Programme may establish shorter periods than those provided for in paragraph 1.

3. In addition to the exceptions laid down in Article 197(2), second subparagraph, of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, the periods referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article may be exceeded for ERC actions, missions-oriented approach and when actions are submitted to an ethics assessment, security scrutiny or assessments ***set out in the delegated a referred to in Article 22b of this Regulation*** to protect the competitiveness of the Union including its strategic assets and interests. ***In that case, the Work Programme or call documents shall specify the corresponding periods.***

Article 26a

Amendments to Grant Agreement

On an exceptional basis, where duly justified in the interest of achieving the overall objective of the call for proposals under which a project was funded, amendments to the grant agreement, in particular to the Description of the Action or to the list of beneficiaries, which are a genuine response to scientific, technological development or relevant innovation shall not be considered to be changes that call into question the grant award decision or the adherence to the principle of equal treatment of applicants, as set out in Article 204(4) of [Financial Regulation]. The Commission shall ensure that, where needed, a request for such an amendment to a grant agreement is considered with support of external expertise. Where it concerns a project funded under a call developed by a Lead Expert under Pillar II, the expertise shall be provided by the relevant Lead Expert and their team. Where it concerns a project funded under the ERC, the ERC Scientific Council shall be responsible for the external expertise to be involved. Where it concerns a project funded under a Challenge-based call of the EIC, the external expertise shall be provided by the relevant Programme Manager.

Article 27

Funding rates

1. A single funding rate per action shall apply for all activities it funds. The maximum rate per action shall be fixed in the Work Programme.

1a. Up to 100 % of total eligible costs of an action under the Programme may be reimbursed.

2. ***By way of derogation from paragraphs 1 and 1a, for Innovation Actions u***p to ***7***0 % of total eligible costs of an action may be reimbursed, except for ***non***-profit legal entities ***as well as SMEs or small mid-caps*** where up to ***10***0% of the total eligible costs may be reimbursed.

Article 28

Indirect costs

1. Indirect eligible costs shall be 25% of the total direct eligible costs, excluding direct eligible costs for subcontracting, financial support to third parties and any unit costs or lump sums which include indirect costs. Where appropriate, indirect costs included in unit costs or lump sums shall be calculated using the flat rate referred to in the previous sentence.
2. Notwithstanding paragraph 1, if provided for in the Work Programme, indirect costs may be declared in the form of a lump sum or unit costs.

Article 29

***Eligible* costs**

1. By way of derogation from Article 193(2) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, costs of resources made available by third parties by means of in-kind contributions shall be eligible up to the direct eligible costs of the third party.
2. By way of derogation from Article 195(2) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509, income generated by the valorisation of the results shall not be considered to be revenues of the action.

2a. Any costs related to standardisation activities, including participation in technical committees of national, European and international standardisation bodies shall be eligible.

2b. Expenses incurred by the beneficiary to provide professional care for dependents of the personnel assigned to the action (Care Support Costs), where such care is necessary to ensure the personnel's availability for the project's implementation, shall be eligible.

2c. For the ERC, care costs shall be recognized as a specific eligible direct cost category, allowing for a top-up of the maximum grant amount to cover documented care expenses that exceed standard institutional support.

2d. For MSCA, care costs shall be implemented through a dedicated "Care and Inclusion Unit Cost," replacing and expanding the previous family allowance to include eldercare and dependent support, regardless of the researcher's marital status.

Article 30

Mutual Insurance Mechanism

1. A Mutual Insurance Mechanism (the 'MIM') is hereby established which shall replace and succeed the Mechanism set up in accordance with Article 37 of Regulation (EU) 2021/695. The MIM shall cover the risk associated with non-recovery of sums due by certain ***[…]*** beneficiaries under direct management, as well as any preexisting risks covered in accordance with Article 37 of Regulation (EU) 2021/695.
2. The MIM shall be managed by the Union, represented by the Commission acting as executive agent. Specific rules for the operation of the MIM shall be set out by the Commission by means of an implementing act ***in accordance with Article 11c(3)***.
3. Beneficiaries shall make a contribution to be offset against the initial pre-financing and paid back to the beneficiaries at the payment of the balance.
4. Any financial return generated by the MIM and any recovered amounts shall constitute external assigned revenue within the meaning of Article 21(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom)

2024/2509 for the Programme, or its successor. If the return is insufficient, the MIM shall not intervene, and the granting authority shall recover any amount directly.

5. Once all grants for which the risk is covered by the MIM are completed, any amounts held by the MIM may be recovered by the Commission and shall constitute external assigned revenue within the meaning of Article 21(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 for the Programme, or its successor.

Article 31

Ownership of results

1. Beneficiaries shall own the results they generate.
2. Two or more beneficiaries shall own results jointly if they have jointly generated them and it is not possible to:

   (a) establish the respective contribution of each beneficiary; or

   (b) separate the results when applying for***, maintaining or obtaining*** their protection.

   They shall agree in writing on the allocation and terms of exercise of their joint ownership. Unless otherwise agreed, each joint owner may grant non-exclusive licences to third parties to valorise the jointly owned results (without any right to sublicence), if the other joint owners are given advance notice and fair and reasonable compensation. The joint owners may agree in writing to apply another regime than joint ownership.

If third parties involved in the action (including personnel) have rights to the results, the beneficiaries shall ensure that those rights can be exercised in a manner compatible with their obligations regarding those results. ***Beneficiaries shall guarantee that agreements with third parties comply with the provisions on background ownership and joint ownership as set out in this Regulation.***

3. Transfer of ownership may be subject to conditions as set out in the Work Programme, call conditions or grant agreement, including a requirement to pass on any obligations regarding the results.

Article 32

Valorisation and dissemination

1. Beneficiaries shall manage their results in accordance with the obligations set out in call conditions or grant agreement. As part thereof, beneficiaries shall:

   (a) protect their results if justified, in particular if the results have commercial potential ***or have particular relevance for the Union's security***;

   (b) grant access to their results and background if needed for implementing action tasks or for valorising results, including for commercial deployment;

   (ba) where relevant, contribute to European and international standardisation;

   (c) undertake best efforts to valorise their results, either directly or indirectly, including through transfer or licensing; if results are not valorised within a given period, the Commission may identify instruments and tools, such as those serving the valorisation strategy set out in Chapter III of Regulation (EU) XXX [European Competitiveness Fund], that the beneficiaries concerned shall use to facilitate the valorisation of those results;

(d) make the results public in an appropriate manner as soon as feasible, while keeping results confidential if needed due to the protection of intellectual assets, security concerns or legitimate interests;

(e) adhere to open science practices, including by:

(i) ensuring open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications regarding the results;

(ii) managing responsibly the research data in the action and other results in line with the principles 'findability', 'accessibility', 'interoperability' and 'reusability' (the FAIR principles) as well as ensuring open access thereto unless doing so would be against legitimate interests, including commercial interests, or other constraints.

(f) unless otherwise provided for in the ***call conditions***, develop and regularly update a plan to manage their results, including data;

(g) grant free access to their results for developing, implementing and monitoring their policies or programmes to the following entities:

(i) to Union institutions, bodies, offices or agencies;

(ii) to Member States' national authorities, where provided in the Work Programme, call conditions or grant agreement.

Article 33

Pre-commercial procurement and public procurement of innovative solutions

1. Grant actions may involve or have as their primary aim the pre-commercial procurement or procurement of innovative solutions. These procurements are to be carried out by beneficiaries which are public procurers or private procurers.
2. The procurement procedures:

(a) when carried out by public procurers: shall comply with competition rules and with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination, equal treatment, sound financial management, proportionality, applicable EU rules for strengthening resilience in supply chains and sector specific regulatory requirements;

(b) when carried out by private procurers: shall comply with the TFEU principles, competition rules and applicable contract law, EU rules for strengthening resilience in supply chains and sector specific regulatory requirements

(c) may authorise the award of multiple contracts within the same procedure (multiple sourcing);

(d) shall provide for the award of the contracts to the tenders offering best value for money while ensuring absence of conflicts of interest.

3. In the case of pre-commercial procurement, the procurement procedure may be conducted with two instead of three phases and may include the purchase of first-of-a-kind solutions to simplify and accelerate implementation.
4. Specific conditions may apply including regarding the place of performance of the procured services, goods or works and the ownership of the results and access thereto. As part thereof, for pre-commercial procurement:

(a) the contractors shall own at least the intellectual property rights to the results they generated, while the procurers shall obtain at least free access to the results

for their own use as well as free access to the results for their current and future contractors to use the results for the procurers.

(b) in case of supply chain overdependencies or security of supply issues with the contractors, or in emergency situations where the contractors cannot supply sufficient solutions to satisfy wider demand on the EU market, the procurers shall have the right to give, or require the contractors to give the right to third parties to commercially use the results for the procurer and for wider markets on a non-exclusive basis and under fair and reasonable conditions;

(c) if contractors fail to commercially use their results within a given period or abuse their results against the public interest, they may be required to transfer their ownership of results to the procurers.

5. Procurement actions carried out by the Commission or implementation bodies may take the form of pre-commercial procurement or public procurement of innovative solutions. These procurements shall be carried out by the Commission or the relevant implementation body on its own behalf or jointly with contracting authorities from Member States and associated countries.

Article 33a

Programme evaluation

1. The Programme shall be evaluated in accordance with Article 10 of [Performance Framework]. This Article complements or specifies the provisions of Article 10 of [Performance Framework]

2. In addition to the requirements laid down in the [Performance Framework], the implementation report referred to in Article 10(2) of [Performance Framework] shall be based on an evaluation carried out with the assistance of independent experts selected on the basis of a transparent process once there is sufficient information available about the implementation of the Programme, but no later than four years after the start of that implementation. It shall form the basis to adjust or re-orientate the Programme, as appropriate.

3. The evaluation referred to in paragraph 2 shall include:

a. an assessment of the Programme's scientific, technological and industrial performance, based on quantitative and qualitative indicators tailored to R&I, benchmarked against comparable programmes internationally. Such indicators may include scientific excellence and impact, high-impact publications, patenting activity and quality, contributions to international technical standards, technology readiness progression, knowledge and technology transfer, research uptake and commercialisation, and contributions to industrial competitiveness and technological sovereignty.

b. an assessment of the long-term impact of previous Framework Programmes;

c. an assessment of the functioning of the impact of Articles 6(2b) and 11(3a) on the ability of the Union to set up Partnerships with a high European added value and on the balance between public and private funding as well as between competitiveness and societal priorities;

d. an assessment of the following specific aspects of the implementation of the Programme:

i. The mission-oriented approach under the moonshots

ii. Multi-disciplinarity in all parts of the Programme

iii. The success of synergies with national and private funding, as well as where appropriate other Union Programmes

iv. The expert-led approach introduced in this Programme

e. an assessment of the pilot for the SSHA Sectoral Plan, as well as the potential of Sectoral Plans as a new form of managing parts of this Programme. On that basis, the Commission shall also assess the feasibility and potential added value of extending this modality to other scientific sectors under the Programme;

f. the functioning of this Regulation taking into account insights from science, experimentation in this Programme and other significant developments, including the development of AI and its impact on science, R&I as well as on the implementation of this Programme.

4. In preparation of the evaluation referred to in paragraph 2, an independent review of the structures and mechanisms of the ERC shall be carried out by 2030 to assess the feasibility and potential added value of establishing the ERC as a Union body provided for under a separate legal basis. Implementation report referred to in Article 10(2) of [Performance Framework] may be accompanied by a legislative proposal for the separate legal basis.

5. In addition to the requirements laid down in the [Performance Framework], the expost evaluation referred to in Article 10(1) of [Performance Framework] shall be carried out with the assistance of independent experts selected on the basis of a transparent process. The evaluation shall include the aspects referred to in points (a), (b) (c) (d) and (f) of paragraph 3.

Title III – Transitional and Final provisions

Article 34a

Exercise of the delegation

1. The power to adopt delegated acts is conferred on the Commission subject to the conditions laid down in this Article.

2. The power to adopt delegated acts referred to in Articles 22b(4) and 11b(3) shall be conferred on the Commission for a period of seven years from …. the date of entry into force of this Regulation.

3. The delegation of power referred to in Article 22b (4) and 11b(3) may be revoked at any time by the European Parliament or by the Council. A decision to revoke shall put an end to the delegation of the power specified in that decision. It shall take effect the day following the publication of the decision in the Official Journal of the European Union or at a later date specified therein. It shall not affect the validity of any delegated acts already in force.

4. Before adopting a delegated act, the Commission shall consult experts designated by each Member State in accordance with the principles laid down in the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making of 13 April 2016.

5. ***As soon as it adopts a delegated act, the Commission shall notify it simultaneously to the European Parliament and to the Council.***

6. ***A delegated act adopted pursuant to Articles Article 22b(4) or 11b(3) shall enter into force only if no objection has been expressed either by the European Parliament or by the Council within a period of two months of notification of that act to the European Parliament and the Council or if, before the expiry of that period, the European Parliament and the Council have both informed the Commission that they will not object. That period shall be extended by two months at the initiative of the European Parliament or of the Council.***

Article 35

Repeal

Regulation (EU) 695/2021 is repealed with effect from 1 January 2028.

Article 36

Transitional provisions

1. This Regulation shall not affect the continuation or modification of the actions concerned, until their closure, under Regulation (EU) 695/2021, which shall continue to apply to the actions concerned until their closure.

2. The financial envelope for the Programme may also cover technical and administrative assistance expenses necessary to ensure the transition between the Programme and the measures adopted under its predecessor, Regulation (EU) 695/2021.

Article 37

Entry into force and application

This Regulation shall enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

It shall apply from 1 January 2028.

This Regulation shall be binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all Member States.

Done at Brussels,

For the European Parliament	*For the Council*
The President	*The President*

ANNEX I

BROAD LINES OF ACTIVITIES

The Programme shall be implemented along the broad lines of activities set out in this Annex and in [Specific Programme].

1. **Pillar I "Excellent Science"**
   a. *European Research Council*
      i. ERC grants awarded to world-leading scientists and their teams, with an emphasis on early-stage researchers, to pursue the most promising avenues at the frontier of science, selected solely on the criterion of excellence
   b. *Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions*
      i. Individual Fellowships ii. Doctoral training networks iii. Staff exchange
   c. *Joint Research Centre – Science for Policy*
      i. Independent, evidence-based knowledge and science supporting the development and implementation of Union policies
   d. *European support for Researchers at Risk*
      i. Fellowships for Researchers at Risk
      ii. Fostering and coordinating support for Researchers at Risk across the Union
      e. *Fast Track to Excellence*
      i. Small-scale, curiosity-driven collaborative research activities
2. **Pillar II "Competitiveness and Society"**
   a. *Competitiveness Window I 'Clean Energy and Industrial Decarbonisation'*
      i. Manufacturing Technologies ii. Low-Carbon, Circular, Resource-efficient and Clean Industries iii. Net-Zero Technologies iv. Clean and Efficient Energy Systems
   b. *Competitiveness Window II 'Biotechnology, Agriculture, Health, and Sustainable Transition'*
      i. Competitive and innovative health solutions ii. Clean, safe, smart and accessible transport and mobility iii. Bio-economy, including forestry, and bio-based industries iv. Biotech and life sciences
      v. Blue economy and water technologies vi. Agriculture, food and feed systems, and food security vii. Cultural and creative industries
   c. *Competitiveness Window III 'Digital Leadership'*
      i. Key Digital Technologies, including Quantum Technologies, Photonics and Microelectronics ii. Artificial Intelligence and Robotics iii. Communication and Cyber infrastructure iv. Cybersecurity
      v. Advanced Computing and Big Data

vi. Tools, technologies and digital solutions for health and care, including personalised medicine

d. *Competitiveness Window IV 'Critical Raw Materials, Security and Space'*

i. Space, including Earth Observation ii. Protection and security iii. Critical Raw Materials and Supply Chain Security iv. Advanced Materials

e. *Society Window I 'Just Green Transition'*

i. Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation of Society ii. Energy Poverty iii. Holistic planetary knowledge base, including climate science, environmental observation and biodiversity iv. Circular systems and Natural Resources v. Pollution prevention and Remediation vi. Water resilience

f. *Society Window II 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Healthy Societies'*

i. Environmental and social health determinants ii. Health care systems iii. Health, including mental health, throughout the life course iv. Women's health

v. Pandemic Preparedness vi. Demographic transformations, including ageing populations and migration vii. Communities and Cities viii. Culture, cultural heritage, including the Cultural Heritage Cloud and creative sectors

g. *Society Window III 'Inclusive Digital Societies'*

i. Digital and cybersecurity literacy ii. Societal impacts of Artificial Intelligence integration in society, labour markets and democratic processes

iii. Human-centred digital environments, including Social Media and addictive algorithmic design patterns

iv. Data governance, including scientific data sovereignty

h. *Society Window IV 'Resilient Societies'*

i. Democracy and governance ii. Social, technological and economic transformations iii. Disaster- and climate resilient societies iv. Peace and international cooperation v. Earth Intelligence

i. *Horizontal Window*

i. Missions ii. R&I activities under the New European Bauhaus Facility, including R&I on housing and building construction

iii. Metrology Partnership iv. Sectoral Plans

j. *Fast Track to Innovation*

i. Small-scale, bottom-up collaborative innovation activities oriented towards industrial competitiveness

3. **Pillar III "Innovation"**

a. *European Innovation Council*

i. Pathfinder ii. Transition iii. Accelerator

b. *European Innovation Ecosystems*

i. Integration and policy support for innovation ecosystems

ii. Activities of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities set up under [EIT Regulation]

4. **Pillar IV "European Research Area"**
   a. *Widening participation and ERA integration*
      i. Capacity building measures, including Teaming, Twinning, ERA Chairs, European Excellence Initiative, Pathways to Synergies, Dissemination and Exploitation Support Facility, Excellence Hubs, and ERA Talents ii. ERA integration measures, including ERA Excellence grants, Mutual learning and experience sharing, dedicated National Contact Points, and EIC Pre-Accelerator
   b. *Research and technology infrastructures*
      i. European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures
      ii. Support for the development of and access to research infrastructures iii. Strategic approach to European Technology Infrastructure development iv. Support for the development of and access to technology infrastructures
   c. *Reforming and enhancing the European R&I system*
      i. Policy Support Facility ii. Support for achieving the ERA

ANNEX II

INDICATIVE NOMENCLATURE

This annex sets out an indicative nomenclature for the relevant Title of the Union budget. It reflects Article 6(2c).

XX				**Horizon Europe**
XX	**01**			**Support administrative expenditure for Horizon Europe**
XX	01	01		Support expenditure for Horizon Europe
XX	**02**			**Excellent Science**
XX	02	01		European Research Council
XX	02	02		Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions
XX	02	03		JRC - direct actions
XX	02	04		European support for Researchers at Risk
XX	02	05		Fast Track to Excellence
XX	**03**			**Competitiveness and Society**
XX	03	01		Clean Energy and Industrial Decarbonisation
XX	03	01	01	Clean Energy and Industrial Decarbonisation - Art 185/187 TFEU initiative
XX	03	02		Biotechnology, Agriculture, Health, and Sustainable Transition
XX	03	02	01	Biotechnology, Agriculture, Health, and Sustainable Transition - Art 185/187 TFEU initiative
XX	03	03		Digital Leadership
XX	03	03	01	Digital Leadership - Art 185/187 TFEU initiative
XX	03	04		Critical Raw Materials, Security and Space
XX	03	04	01	Critical Raw Materials, Security and Space - Art 185/187 TFEU initiative
XX	03	05		Just Green Transition
XX	03	05	01	Just Green Transition – Art 185/187 TFEU initiative
XX	03	06		Sustainable, inclusive and healthy societies
XX	03	06	01	Sustainable, inclusive and healthy societies – Art 185/187 TFEU initiative

XX	03	07		Inclusive digital societies
XX	03	07	01	Inclusive digital societies – Art 185/187 TFEU initiative
XX	03	08		Resilient societies
XX	03	08	01	Resilient societies – Art 185/187 TFEU initiative
XX	03	09		Horizontal Window
XX	03	09	01	New European Bauhaus Facility
XX	03	09	02	Metrology Art. 185 Partnership
XX	03	09	03	Missions
XX	03	09	04	Pilot Initiative for Sectoral Plans
XX	03	10		Fast Track to innovation
XX	**04**			**Innovation**
XX	04	01		European Innovation Council
XX	04	02		Innovation ecosystems and knowledge triangle
XX	04	02	01	Innovation ecosystems and knowledge triangle – KICs under the EIT
XX	04	02	02	Innovation ecosystems and knowledge triangle - EIT
XX	**05**			**European Research Area**
XX	05	01		Reforming and enhancing the European R&I system
XX	05	02		Research and Technology infrastructures
XX	05	03		Widening participation and ERA integration

The following Recitals and Articles from the Council Decision on establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe have been moved to the Regulation establishing Horizon Europe: Recitals 5, 6, (REG:Recitals 36f and 36g) and Article 4 (REG:Article 11b), Article 5(REG: Article 11), Article 6 (1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10) (REG: Article 12), Article 7 (1, 2, 4, 7 , 8)(REG: Article 12a), Article 8 (2) (REG:Article 10), Article 12 (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) (REG: Article 16a), Article 16, (REG: Article 18a) ,Article 17 and Article 18 (REG: Article 18b and 11c)

2025/0544 (CNS)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

on establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2028-2034, laying down the rules for participation and dissemination under that Programme, and repealing Decision (EU) 2021/764

(Text with EEA relevance)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 182(4) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

After transmission of the draft legislative act to the national parliaments,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament[19],

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee[20],

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions[21],

Acting in accordance with a special legislative procedure, Whereas:

(1) In accordance with Article 182(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2028-2034 ('Horizon Europe'), established by Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*] of the European Parliament and of the Council, is to be implemented through Specific Programmes which define the detailed rules for their implementation, fix their duration and provide for the means deemed necessary.

(2) Regulation XXX[*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*] sets out the general and specific objectives of Horizon Europe, the structure and the broad lines of activities to be carried out***. By contrast, in accordance with Article 182(3) TFEU,*** this Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe (the 'Specific Programme') ***serves to give effect to those objectives through its implementing function and therefore should not***

[19] OJ C […], […], p. […].
[20] OJ C […], […], p. […].
[21] OJ C […], […], p. […].

modify, supplement or reinterpret the essential elements, objectives and ***governance arrangements established in Regulation XXX [reference to the*** *Horizon Europe* ***Regulation]***. The provisions on implementation set out in Regulation XXX ***[reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation]*** apply fully to the Specific Programme.

(3) The Board of Governors of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) set up by Commission Decision 96/282/Euratom[22] has been consulted on the scientific and technological content of the Specific Programme on the non-nuclear direct actions of the JRC.

(4) This Council Decision lays down an indicative financial envelope for the Specific Programme.

(5)

(5a) The provisions of this Decision as well as its governance arrangements should be conducive to proper decision making by the budgetary authority and to appropriate oversight by the European Parliament. In particular, in accordance with Article 47(2) of the Financial Regulation, any specification of the Horizon Europe internal architecture should be duly reflected in the budget nomenclature through the introduction of corresponding budget lines.

(6)

(7) The Specific Programme replaces the Horizon Europe Specific Programme established by Council Decision (EU) No 2021/764[23]. Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 should therefore be repealed.

(8) ***The implications of this Decision for the Union budget have been assessed pursuant to Article 310(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Sufficient financial and human resources should be provided for its implementation, while considering the impact of the financing on other Union programmes or policies and ensuring its compatibility with the multiannual financial framework, the system of own resources and the corresponding interinstitutional agreement, as well as with the budgetary principles laid down in Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council[24].***

(9) The Specific Programme should be implemented in compliance with the principle of the rule of law and the rights and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and be in line with the international obligations of the Union and the Member States arising from the international instruments to which they are party, including Human rights instruments such as the ***European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the*** UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities. ***It should also give due regard to other relevant instruments, such as the European Charter for Researchers***.

(10) ***Excellence should remain the guiding principle of the Specific Programme. Research and innovation activities supported under the Specific Programme should be selected on the basis of excellence, and they should enable ambitious, high-quality projects across all fields of science, innovation and technology, social sciences and***

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[22] Commission Decision 96/282/Euratom of 10 April 1996 on the reorganization of the Joint Research Centre (OJ L 107, 30.4.1996, p. 12, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/1996/282/oj).

[23] Council Decision (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU (OJ L 167I, 12.5.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2021/764/oj)

[24] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj

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humanities, and should support breakthrough ideas with the potential to generate transformative advances, while bridging the innovation gap between Member States. Particular attention should be given to attracting and retaining outstanding talents at all stages of their careers, including early-stage researchers, fostering open

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and competitive access to funding, preventing brain drain and promoting brain gain across the Union and associated countries.

(11) ***In order to maximise the scientific, technological and societal impact of Union funding, clear operational objectives for the Specific Programme should be established. To fully tap into the potential of high-risk, high-gain projects, investigator-driven frontier research should also be preserved and strengthened, including through support for bottom-up research actions not predetermined by thematic priorities. Since transformative innovation often arises from unexpected scientific breakthroughs and cannot always be anticipated, predefined, or strategically planned, ensuring continued support for excellence-based, investigator-initiated research is therefore essential to sustaining the Union's global competitiveness and long-term innovation capacity.***

(12) ***The European Research Council has established itself as one of the world's foremost entities for frontier research. The most transformative breakthroughs emerge from research not designed to produce them, and the conditions for such breakthroughs require shielding scientific judgment from external pressures. Any erosion of the ERC's independence, whether through thematic earmarking or institutional interference, would undermine the excellence that justifies its existence. The Programme should therefore preserve the full scientific autonomy of the ERC and of its Scientific Council.***

(13) ***At a time of growing geopolitical tensions and increasing restrictions on academic freedom worldwide, the Union has both an opportunity and a responsibility to position itself as a safe place for researchers whose life, liberty, safety or academic freedom are threatened. Welcoming researchers at risk enriches the European Research Area and reflects the Union's foundational commitment to human dignity and fundamental rights.***

(14) ***The Report of Commission Expert Group on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe of 6 December 2024 (the 'Heitor report') underlines the need to consider new ways of involving recognised experts in Horizon Europe, in particular through the establishment of high-level governance structures, covering the full scope of Pillar II, with a diverse composition covering broad disciplinary, sectoral and geographical representation. Drawing on this recommendation, governance of collaborative research and innovation activities should be underpinned by a High-Level Council, composed of high-level prominent experts from science, innovation, industry and civil society, drawn from across a broad range of scientific disciplines and sectors, and Lead Experts, supported by expert teams, recruited by the Commission for the purpose of developing and monitoring calls for Pillar II. Such a reinforced governance structure should be accompanied by less policy prescriptive calls for proposals, in order to promote scientific excellence, flexibility, and greater impact across the Programme.***

(15) ***Whereas Sectoral Plans are intended to advance specific scientific sectors as a whole through collaborative, bottom-up and excellence-based research and innovation activities, it is necessary to ensure, prior to their full implementation, that the relevant and diverse scientific communities are sufficiently structured, interconnected and prepared to participate effectively in such a framework. Whereas, in particular, the Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts (SSHA) sector is characterised by significant diversity, fragmentation and uneven participation across the Union, a preparatory***

initiative in form of Coordination and Support Action (CSA) should be established in order to map the sector, identify relevant actors, assess capacities and address structural gaps. Such a pilot action should contribute to the establishment of a Community of Practice, the empowerment of less-represented actors, and the strengthening of cooperation across the sector, and should support the development of a Strategic Innovation Agenda and an implementation roadmap for the entire sector. It should provide the basis for an assessment of the feasibility and European added value of establishing an SSHA Sectoral Plan under this Programme and for determining whether such approach should be extended to other scientific sectors.

(16) *The effectiveness of the European Innovation Council depends on its capacity to identify, support and scale breakthrough innovations through proactive portfolio management. Drawing on the programme manager model proven in agencies such as the United States Advanced Research Projects Agencies (ARPA), the EIC should empower dedicated Programme Managers with the expertise, authority and operational autonomy necessary to develop and steer EIC Challenges from conception through to market impact. Programme Managers should be individuals with a demonstrated track record in innovation, technology development or venture building, capable of exercising independent judgement on the strategic direction and composition of their portfolios.*

(17) *The Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), set up under the Regulation (EU) …/… [EIT Regulation], are instruments with which to build pan-European, sector specific innovation ecosystems which integrate the knowledge triangle. For the sustainable engagement of ecosystems, the KICs, guided by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), need sustainable funding. It is necessary to provide further funding from the Union budget for the KICs, whether from the Horizon Europe Programme or other Union programmes, where they can contribute to achieving European objectives by building on their integrated ecosystems. The KICs should be encouraged to find additional funding from sources other than the Programme budget. Balanced funding, including the encouragement to attract additional funding, ensures the stable development and maintenance of pan-European ecosystems which can by their integrated nature contribute to local, regional, national, private and European initiatives and priorities.*

(18) *As the budget of the Horizon Europe Programme represents a comparatively small share of total public research and development expenditure, its impact depends critically on its ability to catalyse and orient national investments. Given that the Union's target of investing 3% of gross domestic product in research and development remains unmet in a majority of Member States, the Programme should explicitly pursue the alignment of national research and innovation priorities with Union objectives and the catalysing of increased national public and private investment in research and development.*

(19) *In the current shifting geopolitical landscape and recognising that civilian and defence technologies and knowledge cannot always be clearly distinguished, where civilian activities can be relevant for defence, this Programme should allow for the finding of activities including technologies or knowledge with dual-use potential. This dual-use potential should, however, not affect the exclusively civilian character of the funded activities under the Programme, in particular the applicable eligibility and selection criteria. In full consistency with its civilian nature, the preparation of work programmes should ensure that all activities funded under the Programme are designed and selected solely on the basis of civilian purposes. Where the results of a civilian activity under the Programme demonstrate a credible pathway to defence application, their further development, deployment or market uptake should remain*

outside the scope of this Programme which is exclusively civilian. Such further development, deployment or market uptake may be supported through other Union instruments designed for that purpose, including the European Competitiveness Fund established by Regulation (EU) XXX [European Competitiveness Fund] and the Specific Programme for defence research, development and innovation established by that Regulation, only where the eligibility and selection criteria, conditions and governance arrangements applicable to those instruments are fulfilled.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Chapter I

General Provisions

Article 1

Subject matter

7. This Decision establishes the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period of the multiannual financial framework (the 'MFF') 2028-2034 (the 'Specific Programme') as set out in Article 1 (2) point (a) of Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*].

8. This Decision lays down the budget of the Specific Programme for the period 20282034, the rules for implementation of the Specific Programme and the activities to be carried out under the Specific Programme.

9. The definitions, objectives, structure and budget of Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation set out in Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*] also apply to the Specific Programme.

Article 2

Operational objectives

10. The Specific Programme shall contribute to the general and specific objectives set out in Article 3 of Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*].

11. The Specific Programme has the following operational objectives:

(d) ***strengthen excellent basic and frontier research across the Union in all disciplines and reinforce and spread excellence, including through measures fostering wider participation and closing the divide in research and innovation performance in the Union;***

(e) foster the production of ***all stages of excellent fundamental and applied*** highquality scientific research and world-leading research institutions;

(f) support the ***structured*** mobility and training and career development of researchers ***at all stages of their careers, with a particular focus on early-career researcher and cross-disciplinary capacity building***;

(g) ***strengthen Europe's capacity to attract*** and retain ***talent***, ***and to interact with*** excellent researchers ***from within and outside the Union;***

(da) foster the circulation of knowledge, researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs in the European Research Area;

(db) strengthen the role of scientific knowledge in society, including in support of evidence-based and science-informed policymaking;

(h) foster ***cross-sectoral*** collaboration and multidisciplinarity, including ***the systematic and comprehensive participation of*** SSH***A*** to generate new knowledge***, address societal challenges, enhance the societal relevance and uptake of innovation***;

(i) enhance knowledge valorisation ***in the Union by facilitating the effective transfer of research results into economic, social, cultural, and policy impact, while safeguarding open science principles and the public value of research***;

(fa) preserve and strengthen investigator-driven frontier research, in order to tap into the full potential of high-risk, high-gain projects;

(j) connect***,*** develop ***and strengthen*** research and technology infrastructures across the European Research Area (ERA)***, ensuring open access to them to researchers from all across the Union and fostering*** transnational ***synergies across domains and sectors;***

(ga) advance the scientific and technological knowledge base needed to address global societal challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, public health threats, food security and digital transition, in support of the Union's commitments under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement adopted on 12 December 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(gb) contribute to increasing the share of Member States' public research and innovation expenditure aligned with Union research and innovation priorities, and to catalysing additional national and private investment in research and development;

(gc) enhance entrepreneurial potential and support ***the development of disruptive innovation and scientific breakthrough to stimulate*** the creation and scale-up of deep tech and innovative start-ups ***across the Union***;

(k) ***promote scientific excellence across the Union while contributing to the reduction of disparities in research and innovation performance, including by supporting measures aiming to enhance*** the participation of research organisation from the widening countries and transition countries referred to in Article 19 of Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*]***, with a view to enhancing cohesion and reinforcing the ERA as a whole***;

(l) foster open science ***practices*** and ensure***, where possible,*** public***, transparent, non-discriminatory*** and open access to ***peer-reviewed scientific publications, research data and other research outputs following the principle 'as open as*** possible***, as closed as necessary'***;

(ja) contribute to advancing the Union's science diplomacy by fostering international cooperation in research and innovation based on mutual benefit, the protection of academic freedom and as open as possible to partners sharing the Union's values and commitment to human rights, while as protective as necessary of the Union's research security interests;

(jb) contribute to establishing the Union as a safe place for researchers whose life, liberty, safety or academic freedom is threatened;

(jc) safeguard the Union's research and innovation ecosystem by managing risks relating to research security, while preserving its principles of openness and international cooperation;

(jd) foster equality, diversity and inclusion across all parts and components of the Specific Programme and the ERA, while recognising intersectional forms of discrimination and disadvantage in research careers and in the design of R&I activities, and ensuring non-discrimination, in compliance with Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;

(je) support gender mainstreaming, including through gender equality plans, integration of the gender dimension in the research and innovation content, gender-balanced advisory bodies, and the promotion of gender equality in research careers and decision-making processes;

(jf) ensure the structural, transparent and inclusive engagement of relevant stakeholders, with a focus on research and innovation community;

(jg) increase the scientific knowledge of all societal challenges and contribute to resilience-building and risk-preparedness needed to address global societal challenges.

Article 3

Budget

12. In accordance with Article 6(1) of Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*], the ***programme*** envelope for the implementation of the ***Decision*** for the period 2028 to 2034 ***shall be*** EUR ***200 003 562 000 in current prices (EUR 177 010 000 000 in 2025 prices).***

13. The amount referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be distributed among the parts as set out with Article 6(2) of Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*].

Chapter II Excellent

Science

Article 6

European Research Council

1. The European Research Council shall provide attractive and flexible funding to enable talented and creative individual researchers, ***with an emphasis on early-stage researchers,*** and their teams to pursue the most promising avenues at the frontier of science, regardless of their nationality and country of origin and on the basis of competition based solely on the criterion of excellence.

2. The ERC shall attract the most talented researchers from all over the world and establish the Union as a world-leading centre for ***R&I***.

3. Through its activities, the ERC shall support, in a bottom-up manner, frontier research carried out across all fields by principal investigators and their teams in competition at European level, including early-stage career researchers. ***Its decision to award proposals shall be based solely on the criterion of scientific excellence. In line with its mission, the ERC shall support 'high risk/high gain' research, including projects employing novel research methods. It shall autonomously develop agile and transparent procedures tailored to this approach to science funding, while respecting the need for accountability for the use of public funding.***

Article 7

ERC Scientific Council

1. The ERC President shall chair the ERC Scientific Council and ensure the leadership of the ERC Scientific Council and its liaison with the ERC dedicated implementation structure and shall represent the ERC Scientific Council in the world of science ***as well as in interaction with the Union institutions***.

2. The ERC Scientific Council shall elect from amongst its members three Vice-Presidents who shall assist the ERC President in its representation and the organisation of its work. They shall hold the title of ERC Vice-President. ***The ERC dedicated implementation structure shall ensure that the three Vice-Presidents are provided with adequate administrative and operational support to effectively exercise their responsibilities***. The members of the ERC Scientific Council shall be compensated for the tasks they perform by means of an honorarium and, where appropriate, reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses.

3. The ERC Scientific Council shall inform the Commission, ***the European Parliament and the Council*** on research trends, data and any matter relevant for policy making and may perform analysis in this respect.

4. ***The ERC President shall engage in a structured dialogue with the European Parliament at least once a year, including for the purpose of the presentation of the ERC annual report and strategic priorities.***

5. In the context of the implementation of the Specific Programme, and in order to carry out ***its*** tasks ***as defined in Article 12a(3) of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation]***, the ERC Scientific Council shall do the following:

(h) as regards scientific strategy:

   i. establish the overall scientific strategy for the ERC, in the light of scientific opportunities;

   ii. establish the work programme and develop the ERC's mix of support measures in accordance with its scientific strategy;

   iii. establish the necessary international cooperation initiatives including outreach activities, to increase the visibility of the ERC for the best researchers from the rest of the world, in accordance with its scientific strategy;

(i) as regards scientific management, monitoring and quality control:

   i. ensure a world-class peer review system based on scientific excellence and on fully transparent, fair and impartial treatment of proposals by establishing positions on the implementation and management of calls for proposals, evaluation criteria, peer review processes including the selection of experts, the methods for peer review and proposal evaluation and the necessary

implementing rules and guidelines, on the basis of which the proposals to be funded will be determined under the supervision of the ERC Scientific Council;

ii. make a proposal based on which experts shall be appointed in the case of ERC frontier research actions;

iii. ensure that ERC grants are implemented according to simple and transparent procedures that maintain the focus on excellence, encourage initiative and combine flexibility with accountability by continuously monitoring the quality of the operations and implementation;

iv. review and assess the ERC's achievements and the quality and impact of the research funded by the ERC and make recommendations and guidelines for corrective or future actions accordingly;

v. establish positions on any other matter affecting the achievements and impact of the ERC's activities and the quality of the research carried out ***in the European Research Area***.

(j) as regards communication and dissemination:

i. raise the global profile and visibility of the ERC by conducting communication and outreach activities, including scientific conferences, to promote the ERC's activities and achievements and the results of the projects funded by the ERC with the scientific community, key stakeholders and the general public;

ii. where appropriate, consult with the scientific, engineering and academic community, regional and national research funding agencies and other stakeholders; iii. regularly ***inform*** the Commission on its own activities.

Article 8

ERC dedicated implementation structure

6. The ERC dedicated implementation structure shall be responsible for the administrative implementation and execution of this component of the Specific Programme. It shall, in particular, implement the evaluation procedures, peer review and selection process in accordance with the strategy established by the ERC Scientific Council and shall ensure the financial and scientific management of the grants. ***The work of the ERC dedicated implementation structure shall be carried out by staff with the appropriate capacities, dedicated to the purpose of ensuring the stable and effective administrative implementation of the ERC and corresponding to its actual administrative needs.***

The ERC dedicated implementation structure shall support the ERC Scientific Council in the conduct of all of its tasks as set out in ***Article 12a of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation] and*** Article 7 ***of this Decision*** including the development of its scientific strategy, its monitoring of the operations and its review and assessment of the ERC's achievements as well as its outreach and communications activities. The ERC dedicated implementation structure shall also provide access to the necessary documents and data in its possession and keep the ERC Scientific Council informed of its activities.

To ensure an effective liaison with the ERC dedicated implementation structure on strategy and operational matters, the leadership of the ERC Scientific Council and the Director of the ERC dedicated implementation structure shall hold regular coordination meetings.

Article 9

Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions

7. The Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) shall focus on ***bottom-up*** investigatordriven research founded exclusively on scientific excellence to support researchers' career, skills development, and mobility at all career stages, ***focusing in particular on a new generation of highly-skilled early-career researchers from all areas, including from the SSHA and providing support for emerging talent from across the Union and beyond***.

8. The MSCA shall be open to any scientific domain under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community.

9. The implementation of the MSCA shall:

   (a) offer attractive ***employment*** conditions and opportunities for career progression, ***especially for early career researchers, including by encouraging fair remuneration in line with national salary frameworks and wage indexation mechanisms***, helping to address systemic issues of career instability and precarity in the research sector. The MSCA shall actively support the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers promoting fair recruitment, transparent procedures, and merit-based advancement[25];

   (b) ensure strategic synergies with the European Research Council (ERC) but also with Union instruments that foster innovation, such as the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the activities to foster the integration of the knowledge triangle – higher education, research and innovation, and business – across the Union, ***including with the KICs,*** as well as other Union programmes such as Erasmus+ ***and the European University Alliances and other public and private stakeholders, while maintaining the instrument's autonomy and bottom-up nature;***

   (c) promote work-life balance, ***gender-considerate work environments including through the implementation of a dedicated "Care and Inclusion Unit Cost" as referred to in Article 29 of Regulation XXX [reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation]***, diversity, and inclusion, setting high standards for working conditions across the European Research Area ***that safeguard existing national labour law standards and collective agreements;***

   (d) ***support researcher mobility, attract and retain emerging talents at all stages of their careers, in particular early-career researchers, and contribute to preventing brain drain and promoting brain gain across the Union and beyond***.

Article 9a

Fast Track to Excellence

10. The Fast Track to Excellence scheme shall support small-scale, curiosity-driven collaborative research activities to foster excellent research across the Union by

[25] COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 18 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe (C/2023/1640). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1640/oj/eng

exploring new avenues of collaboration across borders, and, where appropriate, facilitate multidisciplinarity.

11. Activities under the Fast Track to Excellence shall be implemented through research actions as defined in Article 2 point (20a), of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation].

12. Proposals submitted under the Fast Track to Excellence shall be evaluated solely on the basis of their excellence.

The maximum Union contribution per research action shall be EUR 2 000 000. The maximum duration of research actions shall be two years.

13. The Fast Track to Excellence shall be implemented through a continuously open call for proposals with at least four cut-off dates per year. The interval between two consecutive cut-off dates shall not exceed four months. The cut-off dates shall be established in the work programme. The Commission shall inform applicants of the results of the evaluation of their proposals within 10 weeks from the relevant cut-off date.

14. Proposals shall be evaluated by panels, which shall follow the panel structure of the European Research Council.

Article 9b

European Support for Researchers at Risk

15. The Programme shall offer discipline- and country-agnostic support to researchers at risk.

16. This support shall include a European Fellowship Scheme which shall provide funding for the placement of researchers at risk at eligible European entities. The Fellowship Scheme shall include a crisis response mechanism to be swiftly deployed to address country or region-specific crisis situations. This mechanism shall allow for additional financial contributions from Member States and/or associated countries to be included for the response to a specific crisis. A researcher must be at risk in order to be eligible for the Fellowship scheme. Fellowships shall be allocated to at risk researchers based on their scientific excellence.

17. The Programme shall also contribute to the strengthening of support for researchers at risk across the Union by:

a) providing a mechanism for coordination, networking, peer-learning, exchange of best practices and capacity building for European actors supporting researchers at risk;

b) offering non-financial support for the establishment of national schemes for support to researchers at risk;

c) offering integrated support measures to meet the needs of researchers at risk, including matchmaking, support for host institutions, and capacity development for researchers;

d) providing support for remote or hybrid fellowship arrangements, enabling researchers at risk to continue their academic work when physical relocation is not possible or immediately feasible.

Article 10

Joint Research Centre

18. The activities of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) shall be complementary to indirect actions supporting longer-term policy objectives ***and contributing to evidence-based policymaking in the public interest with clear positive effects for society***. To achieve this, the JRC works with international, national, regional, and local stakeholders, including through scientific collaboration agreements.

    The JRC activities shall:

    – be flexible and responsive to evolving policy ***and societal*** needs.

    – ensure synergy with other EU investments.

    – focus on the following areas:

    i. scientific and technical support to Union policy priorities, in particular (but not limited to) those defined within the framework of the European Competitiveness Fund and those defined within the Horizon Europe Programme;

    ii. knowledge integration and policy impact; iii. territorial

    development and Member State support; iv. scientific excellence

    and international collaboration;

    v. open science, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

Chapter III

Competitiveness and Society

Article 11

Collaborative research and innovation activities

1. Collaborative research activities referred to in Article 15 of Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*] ***shall primarily be implemented through research actions, r***esearch and ***i***nnovation ***actions, and innovation actions, as defined in Article 2, points (20a), (20b) and (20c) of Regulation (EU)…/... [reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation], respectively. Those actions shall be funded through calls under the Windows set out in Articles 11a through 11i of this Decision. Calls shall be proposed by the Lead Experts referred to in Article 15b of Regulation (EU)…/… [Horizon Europe Regulation] or be developed within the European Partnerships established under the Programme***.

2. ***The Windows shall set out the strategic orientation for collaborative research and innovation activities under Pillar II 'Competitiveness and Society'. The broad lines of activities under each Window shall provide indicative guidance on the types of activities that may be supported and shall not act as an exhaustive list of eligible research and innovation activities.***

3. ***The broad lines of activities shall be implemented in a manner that fosters multidisciplinary and cross-window collaboration where necessary to address complex scientific, technological and societal challenges. The implementation of the***

Windows shall ensure synergies between the Competitiveness and Society parts of the Programme.

4. ***The work programme adopted under Article 11b(3) of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation] may provide funding for Policy and Support Actions needed to implement the Programme.***

Article 11a

Competitiveness Window I 'Clean Energy and Industrial Decarbonisation'

19. Research and innovation activities under this Window shall cover, inter alia, the following broad lines of activities:

- ***Manufacturing Technologies;***

This broadline concerns production technologies capable of lowering unit cost, raising productivity and shortening industrial development cycles. Activities may address advanced robotics, additive and hybrid manufacturing, processintegrated sensing, digital twins and artificial intelligence-supported process control, and should bring promising concepts from proof of principle towards validation in industrially relevant conditions. Activities may also address the relation between technology and people in production, and should assess the impact of automation, robotics and AI-supported manufacturing on work organisation, employment and skills, including the adaptation of workspaces and business models to the technological transition. Alongside the processes themselves, activities may address the qualification methods, process models and measurement techniques on which their later industrial use depends. Access to pilot and open testing environments allows small and medium-sized enterprises and mid-caps to validate processes they could not otherwise trial. Activities stop short of establishing installed production capacity and are expected to accommodate production concepts not yet foreseeable at the outset of the Programme.

- ***Low-Carbon, Circular, Resource-efficient and Clean Industries;***

This broadline concerns how European industry can transition to a sustainable, clean, fossil-free and competitive future. Activities may address electrification, hydrogen-based and other alternative process routes, industrial carbon capture, use and storage, the substitution by low-carbon feedstocks, new materials, technologies or processes that reduce pollution, and technologies that allow materials to be recovered and used again. Where circularity is pursued, activities include the measurement and testing methods needed to show that recovered materials are safe for human health and the environment, and demonstrate suitable technical performances. The aim is to produce the performance data, process models and cost evidence on which a later decision to build a first industrial installation can be based, rather than to build the installation.

- ***Net-Zero Technologies;***

This broadline concerns research and innovation activities related to the technologies identified as Net-Zero Technologies in the Net-Zero Industry Act, and their components – except those technologies explicitly covered under other broadlines. Activities may

address performance, durability, recyclability and manufacturability across a broad portfolio and should aim for validation at pilot scale and in relevant operating conditions. Manufacturing science deserves particular attention, since the process routes, materials, tolerances and quality control methods developed at this stage determine whether a device validated in the laboratory can subsequently be produced at industrial rates and acceptable cost. Pilot lines, testing and characterisation capacity and prenormative work support this de-risking. Activities should also consider the social, economic and behavioural dimensions of technology adoption, including community acceptance and the impact of the transition on affected workers and regions. This broadline shall be implemented in synergy with the Euratom Research & Training Programme.

- *Clean and Efficient Energy Systems;*

This broadline concerns the technologies and system concepts required to operate clean and more decentralised energy systems with high shares of variable power generation and electrified demand, as well as increasing renewable and biogenic gaseous and liquid energy carriers from more diversified sources. Activities may address energy network and infrastructure technologies, power electronics, electric power system components and gridenhancing technologies, energy storage in its various forms, carbon capture, use and storage as part of the energy system, as well as digital systemmanagement and control methods - advancing them from concept through laboratory validation towards demonstration in representative network and industrial conditions, while contributing to the overall aim of strengthening the energy resilience of the Union. Solutions for coupling energy carriers and recharging infrastructure fall within scope, together with the modelling, simulation and testing capability needed to establish how such solutions behave before they are relied upon in operation. Pre-normative research and contributions to standardisation are an integral part of the work. Activities may address energy conservation technologies and solutions across the energy system, including within industrial plants and clusters. Solutions for zeroenergy building performance may be addressed, through energy efficiency and renovation technologies for buildings, including energy performance monitoring and control. Activities should also contribute to empowering consumers and communities to act as active participants in energy system markets through regulatory and social market innovation. This broadline shall be implemented in synergy with the Euratom Research & Training Programme.

Article 11b

Competitiveness Window II 'Biotechnology, Agriculture, Health, and Sustainable Transition'

1. Research and innovation activities under this Window shall cover, inter alia, the following broad lines of activities:

- *Competitive and Innovative Health Solutions;*

This broadline concerns the development and validation of new health methods and technologies through the stages at which technical and biological risk is greatest. Activities may address advanced therapies, medical robotics, portable and point-of-care diagnostics, novel biomaterials, next-generation imaging and

the associated production processes, advancing them from proof of concept through preclinical validation towards early clinical demonstration, with the aim of establishing efficacy, safety and feasibility on evidence robust enough to support subsequent development and investment. Cost-efficient production, affordability and accessibility of health technologies, treatment methods and health products should be addressed at an early stage, with the aim of optimising the manufacturing and industrialisation stages for medical innovation. Models, assays, reference materials, clinical validation capacity and regulatory science contribute to the reliability of the evidence generated and fall within the scope of activities. Activities should contribute to universal and equitable access to health technologies and treatments and take into account the ethical, legal and societal impact of new health technologies, including by involving patients, health care professionals and informal care workers from the outset. The activities may support and promote pan-European clinical trials and pan-European large cohort studies.

- *Competitive, Clean, Safe, Smart and Accessible Transport and Mobility;*

This broadline concerns the technologies from which the aircraft, vehicles, vessels and rolling stock of the coming decades will be built as well as completely new mobility and transport concepts, and the electrification of all transport modes. Activities may address propulsion and energy systems, lightweight structures, battery and fuel cell technologies, sustainable fuels, automated driving and flight functions and the architectures integrating them, typically advancing from component-level validation towards demonstration in a relevant environment and, where technical risk warrants it, in operational conditions. Testing, simulation, verification and certification methods form part of the work, since without them such systems cannot subsequently be approved, and integration questions arising between vehicle, energy supply and infrastructure are often where the residual risk lies. Improving safety in all transport modes, as well as road safety, should be a central objective under this broadline. Activities may contribute to the competitiveness of the European manufacturing of transport and mobility technologies and products, including by addressing soft mobility. Activities may assess the impacts of mobility on the environment, human health, including air quality and noise, and social cohesion, and foster accessibility, safeness, and affordability of mobility for all citizens. The broadline should draw on systematic analyses of new mobility patterns and their impacts on transport systems and citizens, and should support the decarbonisation and competitiveness of the European transportation industry, including the aviation industry, drones, short-haul and long-haul aviation and effective air traffic management.

- *Bio-economy, including Forestry, and Bio-based Industries;*

This broadline concerns the processes through which biomass from land, forest and sea can be converted into competitive bio-based materials, chemicals and products. Activities may address conversion efficiency, the broadening of usable feedstocks to include residues, by-products and waste streams, and the validation of resulting processes at bench and pilot scale under conditions representative of industrial operation. Activities should address the sustainability of bioeconomy value chains and biomass sourcing, including by focusing on the societal, ecological and economic dimensions, such as its impacts on the climate, biodiversity, water usage, and rural and coastal

communities. Catalysts and enzymes, separation technologies, process data and product characterisation contribute to establishing technical and economic feasibility, together with the qualification evidence required before bio-based products are specified by downstream users. Technologies for the sustainable mobilisation and higher-value use of wood and other forest-based resources may be advanced in the same manner. Construction of commercial conversion capacity lies beyond the scope of activities.

- *Biotech and Life Sciences;*

This broadline concerns the further development of a strong knowledge base and progress in life sciences, with a focus on enhancing the conversion of Europe's strength in life sciences into validated, industrially usable biotech products. Activities may address genomics, engineering and synthetic biology, protein and enzyme design, cell and gene technologies, biomanufacturing processes and the application of artificial intelligence to biological data, advancing research results towards demonstrated performance in relevant conditions so that others can build on them with known technical risk. Enabling research infrastructure — biofoundries, pilot fermentation and bioprocessing capacity, reference datasets and standardised assays — supports this work, as does attention to scale-up behaviour, reproducibility and process robustness, which are recurring points of failure. Activities may address the disruptive potential of new biotechnologies and their impact on people, industry, society and the environment. Biosafety, biosecurity and research integrity are integral throughout.

- *Blue Economy and Water Technologies;*

This broadline concerns technologies for maritime, offshore, inland and water applications, validated in the environments where they will eventually operate. Activities may address offshore renewable energy systems and their installation and maintenance methods, sustainable aquaculture and marine biotechnology, low-emission and automated vessel and port technologies, marine observation systems, and treatment, reuse, desalination, monitoring and leak-detection technologies for water. Validation against real water qualities, salinity, biofouling and variable load conditions is characteristic of the work, since these are the conditions under which such technologies commonly fail and laboratory results alone establish little. Demonstration in representative marine and operational conditions is therefore often the appropriate endpoint. Full-scale installation and commercial roll-out lie beyond the scope of activities. Activities may contribute to the protection, restoration and sustainable governance of marine, coastal and inland water ecosystems, and coastal communities, including by addressing the impacts of marine litter and plastics, eutrophication, invasive species, overfishing acidification and warming, and other socio-economic dimensions.

- *Agriculture, Food and Feed Systems, and Food Security;*

This broadline concerns technologies and techniques capable of raising the productivity, resilience and profitability of European agriculture, livestock farming, fisheries and horticulture, as well as of the food and feed industry. Activities may address precision and digital farming, agricultural robotics and artificial intelligence, advanced sensor and nanotechnology, seed, plant and animal breeding including new genomic techniques, biological, circular or

lowimpact crop protection and fertilisation, alternatives to pesticides, agroecology and organic farming practices, animal health solutions, food and feed innovation and processing and preservation technologies, advancing them from research results through controlled trials towards validation under representative field, herd and production conditions. Activities may address the interplay between the environment and agricultural production, the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as the sustainable management of soil, water and nutrients. Activities may support the adoption of circular economy principles, including the reduction of food waste, recycling, and short supply chains. Activities may also support innovative fishery technologies, boosting the competitiveness of the European fisheries industry and reducing its environmental impact. Agronomic and performance evidence, multi-site trial data and process characterisation contribute to later approval, uptake and investment. A multi-actor approach involving the endusers, including validation across the range of operational sizes, farming or fishery systems and climatic conditions found in the Union, should be the modus operandi for activities under this broadline to ensure that the research activities deliver results that work for European farmers and fishermen, giving particular attention to the needs of small and medium-sized farms and making new technologies affordable and accessible for them. The activities may contribute to generational renewal in agriculture.

- ***Cultural and Creative Industries;***

This broadline concerns the tools, technologies and methods on which European cultural and creative sectors, organisations, creators and businesses can build. This includes artistic research methodologies and non-commercial forms of cultural and artistic creation. Activities may address production, capture, rendering, translation and distribution technologies across audiovisual and games production, publishing, music, design, architecture, fashion and craft, and may develop and test technical means for establishing authorship, provenance, licensing and remuneration in digital environments, including in the context of generative artificial intelligence and digital platforms, with a view to protecting intellectual property and creator rights and job stability, through prototypes evaluated with professional users in realistic production settings. Standards work, reference implementations and evidence of feasibility support adoption across a sector composed overwhelmingly of small firms. Creative and design methods may also be developed and tested as inputs to industrial innovation, where they contribute to product differentiation. Furthermore, the activities under this broadline may promote the collaboration between the cultural and creative industries with other industrial sectors to foster new types of innovation and include design from the early stages of the innovation journey, while promoting cultural diversity and socio-cultural value.

Article 11c

Competitiveness Window III 'Digital Leadership'

1. Research and innovation activities under this Window shall cover, inter alia, the following broad lines of activities:

- ***Key Digital Technologies, including Quantum Technologies, Photonics and Microelectronics;***

This broadline concerns the design and process capability underlying all digital applications. Activities may address microelectronics and nanoelectronics, photonics, microsystems, quantum computing, communication and sensing, software and cyber-physical systems, together with the materials and process technologies required to fabricate them, advancing from concept and laboratory demonstration towards validated devices and prototypes in relevant conditions. These activities should take due account of energy efficiency and material consumption throughout the technology lifecycle. Design methods and tools, process technologies, packaging and heterogeneous integration approaches, and characterisation and reliability methods fall within scope, and pilot-line access serves to establish that laboratory results are reproducible under fabrication conditions. Quantum technologies may be advanced from scientific demonstration towards engineered subsystems with characterised performance, though the pace at which this is achievable is uncertain and the appropriate level of ambition should be reassessed as the field develops. As such, the activities should contribute to delivering the objectives of the European Quantum Act, in particular the development of the Quantum Internet in Europe.

- ***Artificial Intelligence and Robotics;***

This broadline concerns the capacity of European actors to develop and adapt artificial intelligence and robotic systems. Activities may address model architectures and training methods, efficiency in computation and data use, verifiable and reliable system behaviour, and the integration of artificial intelligence into industrial products and processes, validated on realistic tasks and data. In robotics, autonomous and collaborative systems may be advanced towards demonstration in relevant environments — manufacturing cells, construction sites, field conditions, clinical settings, inspection and maintenance tasks — where unstructured conditions expose limitations that laboratory testing does not. Benchmarking, testing, validation and assurance methods for adaptive systems are themselves an object of research. Activities should address the ethical dimension of artificial intelligence and robotics, such as the mitigation of risks of malicious use, unintended discrimination and interactions between workers and automated systems, and may support their use in assisting persons with disabilities. Activities should be conducted in line with the Union's values, ethical principles and fundamental rights and promote technologies that ensure human oversight, transparency, and nondiscrimination.

- ***Communication and Cyber Infrastructure;***

This broadline concerns network technologies and system concepts for the coming generations of connectivity. Work may address beyond-5G and successor systems, optical and satellite communication, non-terrestrial network integration, network softwarisation, edge computing and quantum communication, advancing from concept through laboratory validation towards demonstration in representative network conditions, and generating the performance evidence that supports European positions in international standardisation. Improvements in energy efficiency, capacity and resilience at component and system level fall within scope, as do testbeds and pilot facilities

in which candidate solutions can be evaluated before commitment. Standardisation and pre-normative work are an integral part of the area. Research may also address the security and resilience of broader cyber infrastructure, such as hardware, networks, software, and data systems underpinning critical services including health systems, energy grids, public administration and financial services, against cyber-attacks and systemic failures. The activities under this broadline may contribute to open-source and open-standard software for network and service infrastructure, building on the Next Generation Internet and reducing dependency on non-European systems, as well as a Digital Fabric for Europe. Activities should be conducted in line with the Union's values and promote a human-centric and trustworthy internet ecosystem that ensures users retain control over their own data.

- *Cybersecurity;*

This broadline concerns the technologies through which the Union secures its digital assets, the digital lives of its citizens and the digital activities of its companies. Activities may address secure hardware and components, postquantum cryptography and migration methods, secure software engineering, threat detection and response, and resilient system architectures, advancing from concept and formal analysis towards prototypes evaluated against realistic adversarial conditions. The security of connected devices, industrial control systems and operational technology deserves particular attention, since compromise there has physical consequences and testing should be conducted in representative rather than idealised environments. Evaluation methods, reference implementations, testing frameworks, standardisation activities and pre-normative work may also be supported. Activities may support societal cyber-resilience and digital literacy, with the aim of protecting citizens and democratic institutions from cyber threats and attacks. Activities should be conducted in line with the Union's values, ethical principles and fundamental rights and promote technologies that ensure human oversight, transparency, and non-discrimination.

- *Advanced Computing and Big Data;*

This broadline concerns the technological basis for European computing capability. Activities may address processor, accelerator and interconnect technologies, energy- and water-efficient and heterogeneous architectures and hardware, systems software and programming environments, advancing from architectural concept and simulation through prototype implementation towards validation on representative workloads. This includes simulation, modelling and data analytics methods that shorten industrial design cycles and reduce reliance on physical testing — across aerospace, automotive, energy, pharmaceutical, materials and other applications — together with their validation against experimental data. The activities may focus on improving access for industrial users, including through privacy-by-design methods for the analysis of personal and confidential data, and particularly for firms without in-house capability, through application software, tools and methods developed and tested with those users. Activities should be pursued in coherence with Union high-performance computing and artificial intelligence infrastructure initiatives, which provide operational capacity.

- *Tools, Technologies and Digital Solutions for Health and Care, including personalised medicine;*

This broadline concerns healthcare technologies and tools validated to the point at which clinical adoption and investment decisions can rest on sound evidence. Activities may address artificial intelligence-supported diagnostics and decision support, medical imaging, sensing and wearable technologies, telehealth and remote monitoring, and the multi-omic and systems approaches underlying personalised medicine, advancing from development through analytical validation towards clinical validation in representative care settings. Interoperability, data quality and validation methods matter particularly here, since such solutions most often fail when applied outside the setting in which they were developed. Regulatory science, evidence-generation methods and health technology assessment approaches adapted to software-based and adaptive medical technologies are themselves objects of research, the absence of accepted methods being a barrier in its own right.

Article 11d

Competitiveness Window IV 'Critical Raw Materials, Security and Space'

1. Research and innovation activities under this Window shall cover, inter alia, the following broad lines of activities:

- *Space, including Earth Observation;*

This broadline concerns the technologies on which European competitiveness in space and autonomous access to space depend. Activities may address launch and access to space, satellite platforms and constellations, in-orbit servicing, manufacturing and assembly, space situational awareness and secure spacebased communication, advancing from concept and breadboard through engineering models towards demonstration in relevant conditions, including inorbit demonstration where ground validation cannot establish performance. Earth observation capability may be advanced through new instruments, sensing techniques and data-processing methods that address identified observation gaps and convert measurements into usable information products, including for addressing societal and environmental challenges, such as by building synergies with Earth Intelligence. Qualification, testing and characterisation evidence supports later decisions to commit a technology to an operational mission. The activities under this broadline should include the R&I activities needed for the functioning of all components of the Union Space Programme, as well as R&I activities downstream from those components.

- *Protection and Security;*

This broadline concerns capabilities for the protection of citizens, public spaces, critical infrastructure and supply chains. Activities may address detection, surveillance, screening, forensic and situational awareness technologies, protection against physical, cyber and hybrid threats, terrorism prevention, border and maritime security capabilities and counter-drone and counterCBRN-E concepts, advancing from research through prototype development towards demonstration and evaluation with practitioners in realistic conditions. Activities may draw on social sciences to understand the driving factors and impacts of security threats across different socio-

demographic characteristics, with a view to designing effective security responses. Test methods, performance benchmarks and interoperability specifications contribute to establishing whether a capability works under operational constraints, and the involvement of end users throughout helps ensure that validated solutions correspond to actual requirements. Flexibility to address threats that have not yet emerged is essential in this area.

- *Critical Raw Materials and Supply Chain Security;*

This broadline concerns the technological options through which the Union can reduce its overdependence on non-European sources of critical materials. Activities may address exploration and sustainable extraction, processing and refining, substitution of scarce and critical inputs, and recycling and recovery from complex end-of-life products and industrial residues, advancing from laboratory demonstration through bench and pilot scale towards validation on representative feedstocks. Process data, yield and purity evidence, environmental performance characterisation and cost modelling support later decisions on processing and recycling capacity, which lies beyond the scope of activities. Material efficiency and design for recovery may be advanced in parallel, as may analytical methods for identifying dependencies across components and equipment. Activities may address the environmental and community impact of extraction and processing activities.

- *Advanced Materials;*

This broadline concerns the materials on which progress in clean energy, digital technologies, health, transport, space and security depends. Activities may seek to shorten discovery and development cycles through computational design, artificial intelligence-driven discovery, autonomous experimentation and high-throughput characterisation, and may advance promising materials from synthesis at laboratory scale through pilot production towards validation in intended applications. Safe- and sustainable-by-design materials, including bio-based materials, with characterised performance, durability, recyclability and environmental footprint are, together with the processing routes needed to produce them at usable quantities and consistent quality, a critical part of the activities. Characterisation methods, materials data, testing protocols and prenormative work, including risk assessments for human health and the environment, support later qualification and standardisation.

Article 11e

Society Window I 'Just Green Transition'

1. Research and innovation activities under this Window shall cover, inter alia, the following broad lines of activities:

- *Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation of Society;*

This broadline concerns strengthening the capacity of societies to mitigate and adapt to the accelerating impacts of climate change through integrated technological, environmental and social approaches. Activities may address climate adaptation and resilience strategies, nature-based solutions, resilient infrastructure, climate risk assessment and preparedness for extreme weather events, while examining the social and economic conditions necessary for a just

transition. Activities should contribute to understanding distributional impacts, labour market transformations, behavioural change, community-level adaptation and social innovation, ensuring that climate action strengthens societal resilience.

- *Energy Poverty;*

This broadline concerns reducing energy poverty and strengthening affordable, secure and resilient access to energy for households and communities, with a particular focus on developing low-cost clean energy alternatives that are accessible. Activities may address the social, economic and behavioural dimensions of energy vulnerability, alongside innovations that improve the affordability and accessibility of clean energy solutions. Activities should support citizen and community energy participation, including local production, consumption and energy sharing, while contributing to resilient energy systems capable of responding to price volatility arising from geopolitical tensions, market developments and climate-related disruptions.

- *Holistic Planetary Knowledge Base, including Climate Science, Environmental Observation and Biodiversity;*

This broadline concerns strengthening Europe's knowledge base on Earth systems, including climate, water systems, atmosphere, cryosphere, terrestrial ecosystems, biodiversity and natural resources to support evidence-based environmental governance and long-term societal resilience. Activities may address climate science, environmental observation, biodiversity monitoring, ecosystem restoration and sustainable land and water management, supported by advanced observation technologies, modelling and data integration. Activities should contribute to the understanding of the interactions between climate, biodiversity and human activities, while contributing to the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of Europe's natural capital.

- *Circular Systems and Natural Resources;*

This broadline concerns advancing circular approaches that reduce pressure on finite natural resources while strengthening Europe's resource resilience and industrial sustainability. Activities may address sustainable materials, circular product design, resource efficiency, waste prevention, reuse, repair, remanufacturing and industrial symbiosis, supported by life-cycle assessment, material traceability and reliable sustainability information. Activities should contribute to more resilient value chains, informed consumer choices and investment decisions, and address the preservation of biodiversity, ecosystems and the natural capital and services on which resource resilience depends, including understanding how they contribute to social cohesion and health and well-being, while supporting the transition towards competitive circular production and consumption systems.

- *Pollution Prevention and Remediation;*

This broadline concerns preventing pollution at its source and across value chains while improving technologies and practices for remediation across environmental media. Activities may address pollution prevention in industrial production, agriculture and urban environments, alongside innovations for

monitoring, remediation and the recovery of contaminated ecosystems. Activities should contribute to reducing environmental damage, protecting human health and lowering the long-term economic and societal costs associated with pollution management and environmental restoration.

- *Water Resilience;*

This broadline concerns strengthening Europe's long-term resilience to growing pressures on water resources arising from climate change, environmental degradation and increasing societal demand. Activities may address integrated water resource management, water efficiency, ecosystem restoration, flood and drought preparedness, water quality monitoring and the prevention of water pollution. Activities may support sustainable water stewardship, resilient water infrastructure and innovative governance approaches that contribute to water security, disaster preparedness and the restoration of the natural water cycle across the Union.

Article 11f

Society Window II 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Healthy Societies'

1. Research and innovation activities under this Window shall cover, inter alia, the following broad lines of activities:

- *Environmental and Social Health Determinants;*

This broadline concerns activities to identify, assess, mitigate and prevent health risks and threats arising from environmental change, including climate change, pollution, chemical exposure and industrial activity. Activities may address the complex interplay between environmental degradation and population health outcomes, with particular attention to vulnerable groups and regions disproportionately affected by environmental and societal health burdens, as well as fostering understanding of poverty-related conditions and neglected diseases, with a focus on their societal dimensions, including health behaviour, public awareness, equity of access to prevention and treatment, and the socio-economic consequences of the diseases. The activities may include a comprehensive approach to study the health effects of the exposome, including through large-scale cohort studies, and develop methods, treatments and policies to address adverse health effects identified. It may draw on digital tools and data-driven approaches, to strengthen the evidence base for policy action and regulatory frameworks.

- *Health Care Systems;*

This broadline is about the development of more effective, accessible, resilient, resourceefficient and human-centred health care systems across the Union. Activities may address barriers to access to health care between different population groups and may contribute to more cost-effective and sustainable models for the delivery of health and care services. The adaptation of health care systems to rapidly changing environments in which health care professionals deliver the care to their patients, including the integration of artificial intelligence and digital tools, may be addressed, including activities supporting the improvement of working conditions of the health care workforce. New models for public health care should prioritise human-centred design, strengthening system resilience, and data protection regarding personal health and

lifestyle information, and the capacity to respond to emerging health challenges. Activities may draw on digital health tools and data-driven approaches.

- *Health, including Mental health, throughout the life course;*

This broadline is about the varying health needs of individuals in all different stages of life, recognising that effective prevention, diagnosis and care require approaches tailored to age, circumstance and individual need. Activities may identify and address gaps in health equity and barriers to access faced by specific groups, including persons with disabilities, those with chronic conditions, and those affected by injury or long-term illness. Activities should support health education and the promotion of a healthy start of life, including through improved nutrition and support for the transition towards healthy and environmentally sustainable dietary patterns, with a view to preventing health deterioration, reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases in later life and contributing to environmental sustainability. Activities on healthy ageing may address the physical, cognitive and social dimensions of ageing and support the development of solutions that enable older people to maintain quality of life, independence and active participation in society. This broadline should enable more accessible mental health – including by addressing societal causes of care avoidance and improving public understanding of mental health conditions – and strengthen the capacity of health and care systems to deliver timely, evidence-based mental health services. Activities may support the development of improved treatments and therapeutic approaches, crisis intervention services, and community-based models of care that address mental health across the life course.

- *Women's Health;*

This broadline is about the specific health needs, risks and conditions faced by women throughout the course of their lives. Activities should support research into womenspecific diseases and health concerns, close existing knowledge gaps in the understanding of conditions that disproportionately or exclusively affect women, and contribute to the development of more targeted prevention, diagnosis and treatment approaches. Activities may identify and further understand the causes of underrepresentation of women's health in clinical and biomedical research and less favourable treatment results for women.

- *Pandemic Preparedness;*

This broadline is about the Union's capacity to anticipate, prevent and respond to pandemic risks, drawing on the lessons of recent health crises. Activities should contribute to the development of prediction, early warning systems, surveillance infrastructure and rapid response mechanisms, as well as to a better understanding of and more effective approaches to address the causes of outbreaks, including environmental change and human-animal-ecosystem interfaces. Furthermore, research into the governance frameworks, international cooperation arrangements and public health capacities required for effective pandemic management may be supported. The societal dimensions of pandemic preparedness, including public trust, health communication, behavioural responses, vaccination uptake and hesitancy and the equitable distribution of countermeasures, should constitute a central focus, complementing competitive research into vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. Epidemiological research and approaches drawing on personalised medicine may contribute to deepening the understanding of transmission dynamics and disease burden across different population groups.

- *Demographic Transformations, including Aging Populations and Migration;*

This broadline addresses the profound demographic transformations confronting European societies, including the challenges and opportunities arising from ageing populations, declining birth rates and migration. Activities may support research into the intergenerational dimensions of demographic change, including from the perspective of young people, and should contribute to the development of policy responses, social services and public infrastructure capable of adapting to shifting demographic realities. Activities should address the integration of migrants into European societies, the governance of migration in a manner grounded in fundamental rights and human dignity, and the social, economic and cultural dimensions of diverse and changing communities.

- *Communities and Cities;*

This broadline is about the development of sustainable, inclusive and liveable communities and cities, addressing the complex interplay between urban design, social infrastructure, needs of the economy, environmental quality and human well-being. Activities may support research into the planning and design of urban spaces, including green infrastructure, accessible public spaces, third spaces and sustainable, affordable and soft mobility solutions, with a view to creating cities that are resilient to climate change and conducive to health, social connection and quality of life. The specific challenges and opportunities of rural areas should be addressed alongside urban priorities, with activities examining rural-urban linkages, access to services and infrastructure, and the conditions for sustainable and vibrant rural communities. Activities may draw on interdisciplinary approaches combining urban planning, social sciences, environmental science and digital innovation to generate solutions that respond to the needs of diverse communities across the Union.

- *Culture, Cultural Heritage, including the Cultural Heritage Cloud and Creative Sectors;*

This broadline concerns the advancement of knowledge of and access to Europe's rich and diverse cultural heritage and support the vitality of its cultural and creative sectors. Activities may support the development of innovative approaches to the preservation, conservation, restoration and digital accessibility of historical and cultural artefacts, collections and sites, including through the Cultural Heritage Cloud as a shared European infrastructure for the storage, interoperability and open access of cultural heritage data, preservation endangered languages and promotion of multilingualism. Activities may address the role of culture and cultural heritage in European identity and ensuring social cohesion, cultural diplomacy and international engagement, as well as the economic and social contribution of the cultural and creative sectors in Europe. Activities may contribute to overcoming the challenges facing journalism and media in an increasingly digitalised and AI-shaped information environment, supporting research into the conditions for a free, pluralistic and sustainable media ecosystem. Museums, archives and other cultural institutions should be supported in developing more accessible, inclusive and innovative models for engaging diverse audiences and safeguarding Europe's cultural memory for future generations.

Article 11g

Society Window III 'Inclusive Digital Societies'

1. Research and innovation activities under this Window shall cover, inter alia, the following broad lines of activities: - Digital and Cybersecurity Literacy;

This broadline concerns equipping citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to participate safely, confidently and fairly in an increasingly digital society. Activities may address media literacy, cybersecurity awareness, digital skills development and educational approaches that help citizens navigate emerging online risks, including fraud, disinformation, manipulation and privacy threats. Activities should support lifelong and intergenerational learning, paying particular attention to children, young people, older persons and other vulnerable groups, while contributing to reducing the digital divide and strengthening societal resilience against evolving cyber threats.

- ***Societal impacts of Artificial Intelligence Integration in Society, Labour Markets and Democratic Processes;***

This broadline concerns understanding and shaping the societal impacts of the growing deployment of artificial intelligence across public life, workplaces and democratic institutions. Activities may address trustworthy artificial intelligence, human oversight, algorithmic accountability, changes in labour markets, skills development and the evolving relationship between automation and work. Activities may also address the impact of artificial intelligence on mental health, child development and interpersonal skills, as well as on creative work and cultural diversity. Research should contribute to ensuring that artificial intelligence systems remain aligned with Union values and fundamental rights, while strengthening Europe's capacity to deploy artificial intelligence in ways that support democratic resilience, social inclusion and sustainable economic competitiveness.

- ***Human-centred Digital Environments, including Social Media and Addictive Algorithmic Design Patterns;***

This broadline concerns promoting digital environments that protect users' well-being, autonomy and fundamental rights while fostering trustworthy online participation. Activities may address social media, online platforms, gaming environments, algorithmic curation, recommender systems and behavioural design practices, including the societal effects of the attention economy and addictive digital interfaces. Research should improve understanding of the impacts of digital environments on mental health, particularly among children and young people, while supporting the development of safer, more transparent and human-centred digital services.

- ***Data Governance, including Scientific Data Sovereignty;***

This broadline concerns strengthening Europe's capacity to govern, share and use data in ways that safeguard fundamental rights while supporting research, innovation and strategic autonomy. Activities may address privacy-enhancing technologies, federated and distributed data architectures, trusted data-sharing mechanisms and common European data spaces aligned with Union values and environmental standards. Activities should contribute to strengthening scientific data sovereignty, reducing critical dependencies, improving cross-border interoperability and enabling secure access to high-quality data for research, public services and innovation across the Union. Activities may contribute to building sovereign European datasets and databases, in particular by contributing to the further development of the European Open Science Cloud.

Article 11h

Society Window IV 'Resilient Societies'

1. Research and innovation activities under this Window shall cover, inter alia, the following broad lines of activities:

- ***Democracy and Governance;***

This broadline concerns strengthening democratic resilience, good governance and the rule of law in the face of growing geopolitical pressures, foreign information manipulation and interference, technological disruption and societal polarisation. Activities may address democratic participation, civic engagement, institutional trust, media pluralism, disinformation, hate speech, extremism, corruption, countering radicalisation, organised crime and the protection of fundamental rights, drawing on legal, political and social sciences. Activities should contribute to fostering an inclusive European civic space, strengthening democratic literacy across generations, supporting evidence-based governance and exploring innovative approaches that bring democratic participation closer to citizens, including through trusted European information ecosystems. This broadline may also address the state of academic freedom, the role of academic freedom in open democratic societies and how academic freedom can be safeguarded in a changing world.

- ***Social, Technological and Economic Transformations;***

This broadline concerns improving Europe's understanding of profound social, technological and economic transformations to support evidence-based policymaking and long-term societal resilience. Activities may address science literacy, critical thinking, strategic foresight, large-scale longitudinal data collection, the mapping of societal and economic developments, the societal implications of artificial intelligence and digitalisation, and the development of advanced analytical tools for understanding productivity, innovation and structural economic change. In particular, large crossborder longitudinal cohort studies may be used to develop Europe's understanding. Activities should contribute to strengthening the European knowledge base, including through shared research infrastructures such as a European Social Sciences Observatory, while advancing gender equality, addressing gender-based violence and reducing structural inequalities across society.

- ***Disaster- and Climate Resilient Societies;***

This broadline concerns strengthening society's capacity to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and recover from natural, technological and human-induced disasters. Activities may address early-warning systems, disaster risk modelling, crisis preparedness, emergency governance, resilient infrastructure, community preparedness and recovery strategies capable of addressing compound and cascading risks across climate, health, technological and geopolitical dimensions. Research should contribute to improving coordination between scientific knowledge, operational capabilities including innovative capacities for first-responders and public authorities, thereby enhancing Europe's overall resilience and preparedness for future crises.

- ***Peace and International Cooperation;***

This broadline concerns strengthening Europe's capacity to contribute to peace, international cooperation and a stable multilateral order through research, dialogue and scientific collaboration. Activities may address changing geopolitical dynamics, conflict prevention, mediation, peacebuilding, international governance, science diplomacy and cooperation with international partners on shared global challenges. Activities should contribute to evidence-based external action, strengthen Europe's role as a trusted scientific partner and support peaceful cooperation grounded in international law, fundamental rights and multilateral engagement.

- ***Earth Intelligence;***

This broadline concerns transforming Earth observation data into actionable knowledge that supports public-interest decision-making across environmental, societal and

economic domains. Activities may address the integration of satellite observations, environmental monitoring, socio-economic data, artificial intelligence, advanced analytics and digital modelling to generate timely and reliable insights for policymakers and public authorities. Activities should contribute to strengthening Europe's Earth Intelligence capabilities by improving forecasting, risk assessment, territorial planning and crisis response through the combination of Earth system science and social science perspectives.

Article 11i

Horizontal Window

1. ***Research and innovation activities under this Window shall cover the following components:***

- ***(a) research and innovation*** activities supporting ***the five*** EU Missions referred to in Article 15(5)***(a)*** of Regulation XXX [*reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation*]. ***Sufficient funding shall be made available by other Union programmes and initiatives, in particular the [European Competitiveness Fund] to support the deployment and scaling up of the research and innovation activities of the Missions:***
- ***Adaptation to Climate Change: Support at least 150 European regions and communities to become climate resilient by 2030;***
- ***Cancer: Improving the lives of more than 3 million people by 2030 and working to ensure a better life for those affected by cancer or at risk;***
- ***Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030;***
- ***100 Climate-neutral and Smart Cities by 2030;***
- ***A Soil Deal for Europe: 100 living labs and lighthouses to lead the transition towards healthy soils by 2030.***
- ***(b) research and innovation*** activities in the context of the New European Bauhaus

(NEB) Facility, established with the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027[26], shall deliver on the objectives of the New European Bauhaus, in particular supporting activities to foster the development of innovative research solutions for the transformation of neighbourhoods into sustainable, inclusive and beautiful places***, including the energy efficiency and decarbonisation of buildings, while the deployment and scaling up of the R&I component shall be delivered through other Union programmes and initiatives, such as the [European Competitiveness Fund].***

- ***(c) Metrology Partnership;***

Research and innovation on metrology as part of an Article 185 TFEU Partnership supporting the strengthening of Europe's measurement science capabilities as a cross-cutting foundation for scientific progress, industrial innovation, market regulation and consumer protection across the Programme's windows. Activities may

[26] Commission Implementing Decision C(2024)1741 of 20 March 2024 on adopting the 2025-2027 strategic research and innovation plan under the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

address advanced measurement methods, standards, calibration technologies and reference systems relevant to any field supported under this Programme, including emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, advanced materials, health, environmental monitoring and digital infrastructures. Activities should contribute to ensuring the accuracy, interoperability, reliability and international comparability of measurements, thereby supporting evidence-based regulation, technological competitiveness and the broader objectives of the Programme across all windows.

- ***the pilot initiative to support the preparation of a Sectoral Plan for collaborative research and innovation activities within the SSHA sector, as set out in Article 11k of this Decision and Article 15d of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation].***

Article 11j

Missions

1. ***Activities under the Window referred to in Article 11i point (a), shall support the five EU Missions, through:***
   a) ***the continuation and completion of their mission-oriented research and innovation activities;***
   b) ***the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the implementation of the mission-oriented research and innovation activities;***
   c) ***the broad engagement of citizens, regions, cities, local communities and other relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the mission-oriented research and innovation activities, and the strengthening of capacities for Mission uptake across the Union.***
2. ***By the end of 2029, the Commission shall carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the five EU Missions and their implementation, results, impacts and lessons learned, with a focus on the added value of the mission-oriented approach in the achievement of complex transformative and systemic socio-technical changes. The Commission shall ensure than an independent review is conducted in a transparent process agreed with the European Parliament and the Council. The Commission shall submit its findings to the European Parliament and to the Council and shall enter into a structured exchange with both institutions on the conclusions of the evaluation and its relevance for the design of new mission-oriented initiatives.***

Article 11k

Pilot Initiative for an SSHA Sectoral Plan

1. ***A pilot action shall be established under Pillar II of the Programme to support the preparation of a Sectoral Plan for collaborative research and innovation activities within the SSHA sector. The pilot action shall be implemented through coordination and support action as defined in Article 2 point (20), of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation].***

2. The pilot shall, in an open, transparent and inclusive manner, bring together relevant and diverse research institutions, networks and stakeholders acting in the public interest that are active in the SSHA sector across the Union and shall:

a) map the research and innovation ecosystem, including relevant actors, capacities and collaboration structures and in terms of scientific strengths, emerging areas of excellence, and structural gaps in participation and capabilities;

b) establish a Community of Practice for the sector;

c) assess barriers to participation and cooperation within and across Member States;

d) support capacity-building and the integration of less-represented and lessconnected actors.

3. The pilot action shall develop:

a) a Strategic Innovation Agenda identifying long-term scientific, societal and innovation priorities for the entire sector, enhancing its competitive value as a whole, to serve as the strategic basis for a future SSHA Sectoral Plan;

b) an implementation roadmap setting out possible governance arrangements, coordination mechanisms and strategic orientations for future sectoral cooperation, including by building on and further developing existing forms of long-term institutional cooperation, such as the European Universities Alliances as defined in Regulation (EU) …/… [Erasmus+ Programme 2028-2034] and other relevant Union networks, in form of a SSHA Sectoral Plan.

4. The pilot action shall monitor and evaluate the inclusiveness and broadness of participation, the strengthening of cooperation, the reduction of fragmentation and structural disparities within the sector, and the European added value of a potential SSHA Sectoral Plan. The Commission shall ensure an independent evaluation of the pilot action is carried out by independent experts, on the basis of which, the Commission may decide to establish an SSHA Sectoral Plan no later than 6 months after the conclusion of that evaluation. The Commission may also assess the feasibility of extending this modality to other scientific sectors.

5. The Sectoral Plan shall constitute a specific modality for implementing collaborative research and innovation activities under Pillar II, enabling research institutions across the Union active in the SSHA sector to jointly develop longterm, bottom-up research plans around shared themes, advancing the given sector as a whole. The research plans shall include a research focus theme, portfolio of concrete research projects and an indicative spending plan. They shall be assessed

and evaluated on the sole criterion of excellence by an independent panel of experts in line with a peer-review system.

Article 11l

European Moonshots

1. European moonshots shall be mission-oriented initiatives identified and selected by the Commission through a transparent, inclusive, and competitive process, in close coordination with the European Parliament, the Member States, and, where appropriate, associated countries. In addition to the requirements set out in Article 11a of Regulation XXX (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation], the following criteria shall apply:

a) the moonshot objective shall address transformative socio-technical outcomes that go beyond the scope of individual Horizon Europe research and innovation actions and require coordinated contributions from the Programme and at least one other Union programme other than the [Horizon Europe Regulation];

b) the moonshot shall demonstrate concrete commitments from Member States, and, where appropriate, from associated countries and financial or in-kind contributions from other relevant stakeholders, including private partners.

2. The Commission shall establish an implementation plan for each European Moonshot, which shall include:

a) timebound milestones covering the trajectory from research through scaleup to deployment;

b) a requirement to provide a demonstrated and substantial contribution to relevant Union policy priorities and, where applicable, to related legislative initiatives.

The implementation plans shall remain open to a diversity of approaches and solutions, ensuring that European Moonshots foster creative, bottom-up ideas for achieving their mission-oriented objectives.

Article 11m Fast Track to Innovation

1. The Fast Track to Innovation scheme shall support small-scale, bottom-up collaborative innovation activities oriented towards activities with relevance for industrial competitiveness to foster excellent innovation in Europe. It shall support researchers and innovators exploring new avenues of collaboration across borders, across disciplines and across sectors to foster innovation.

2. Activities under the Fast Track to Innovation shall be implemented through research and innovation actions or innovation actions as defined in Article 2 point (20b) and (20c) of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation], a continuously open call for proposals and shall support research projects with a budget of up to EUR 2 000 000 with a duration of up to two years. It shall have at least four cut-off dates per year. The interval between two consecutive cut-off dates shall not exceed four months. The cut-off dates shall be established in the work programme. The Commission shall inform applicants of the results of the evaluation of their proposals within 10 weeks from the relevant cut-off date.

Chapter IV

Innovation

Article 12

The European Innovation Council Board

1. The EIC Board President shall chair the EIC Board, prepare its meetings, assign tasks to members and may establish dedicated sub-groups. The EIC Board President shall represent the EIC Board's views in the world of innovation and act as an interlocutor with the Commission.
2. ***The EIC Board President shall engage in a structured dialogue with the European Parliament at least once a year, including for the purpose of the presentation of the EIC annual report, strategic priorities and the use of EIC funds.***
3. ***The EIC Board shall elect from amongst its members three Vice-Presidents who shall assist the EIC President in its representation and the organisation of its work. They shall hold the title of EIC Vice-President.***
4. ***The members of the EIC Board shall be compensated for the tasks they perform by means of an honorarium and, where appropriate, reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses.***
5. ***The EIC Programme Managers shall possess the scientific or technical expertise and entrepreneurial judgement necessary to assess the potential of breakthrough innovations and to take informed decisions on the direction of their portfolios. Programme Managers shall be persons with a proven track record in one or more of the following fields:***
    a. ***deep-tech innovation;***
    b. ***technology development;***
    c. ***venture building;***
    d. ***technology transfer;***
6. ***Pursuant to Article 16a(7b) in the Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation], the Programme Managers shall be responsible for the development and monitoring of the Challenge-based calls within their field of expertise. The Programme Manager shall send the draft calls to the Programme Committee and the EIC Board. The draft calls shall be discussed in a Programme Committee at which the relevant Programme Manager shall participate. During the Programme Committee meeting, the Programme Manager shall present the draft call and explain the rationale behind it as the Commission representative responsible for its development. The EIC Board may deliver a recommendation on the draft calls, which the Commission shall take into consideration when adopting the Challenge-based calls.***
7. ***The EIC Programme Managers shall closely coordinate with the VPERED Programme Managers established in Article 46c of Regulation (EU) …/… [[European Competitiveness Fund] in order to exploit relevant synergies between their respective portfolios.***
8. The Commission shall establish a EIC Board code of conduct addressing, in particular, the avoidance of conflicts of interest and breach of confidentiality. The members of the EIC Board shall agree to abide by the code of conduct upon assuming office***, and shall be dismissed in case a conflict of interest or another violation arises***.

Article 12a

EIC dedicated implementation structure

2. The EIC dedicated implementation structure shall be responsible for the administrative implementation and execution of the EIC actions. It shall, in particular, implement the evaluation procedures, including jury interviews, and selection process in accordance with the strategy established by the EIC Board and shall ensure the financial and innovation management of the grants. The EIC Fund established in the Regulation (EU) …/… [[reference to the Horizon Europe Regulation] shall be responsible for the implementation of the investment support of the EIC.

3. The EIC dedicated implementation structure shall support the EIC Board in the conduct of all of its tasks as set out in Article 16a of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation] and Article 12 of this Decision, including the development of the overall strategy for the EIC, its monitoring of the operations and its review and assessment of the EIC's achievements as well as its outreach and communications activities. It shall provide direct support to the EIC President and EIC Vice-Presidents for the execution of their tasks. The EIC dedicated implementation structure shall also provide access to the necessary documents and data in its possession and keep the EIC Board informed of its activities.

4. To ensure an effective liaison with the EIC dedicated implementation structure on strategy and operational matters, the EIC President and Vice-Presidents shall hold regular coordination meetings with the Director of the EIC dedicated implementation structure.

5. The EIC dedicated implementation structure shall employ the EIC Programme Managers and support them in the execution of their tasks as set out in Article 16a(7b) of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation].

6. The Commission shall ensure complementarity and coherence with relevant Union programmes and instruments, including the Specific Programme for defence research, development and innovation established by Article 46 of Regulation (EU) …/… [European Competitiveness Fund].

Article 13

Innovation Ecosystems The

Specific Programme shall support:

(k) the establishment and support of connected hubs across the Union, providing innovators, start-ups and scale-ups access to resources, services and partners, including investment opportunities, first buyers of R&I and innovative solutions, corporates, experimentation facilities, research and technology infrastructures, entrepreneurial talent, coaching and mentoring;

(l) activities to develop pan-European innovation ecosystems in key thematic areas, support the development of innovation skills and early-stage venture building, fostering the integration of the knowledge triangle – higher education, research and innovation, and business – across the Union***, including through the KICs set up according to the Regulation on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) by providing them with funding to build and maintain the ecosystem***;

(m) programmes to support innovative SMEs, ***innovative*** start-ups and scale-ups to expand and access international markets through market viability studies, place-based

innovation tools, collaborative research and innovation, exchange of talents, tailored mentorship, ***access to research and technology infrastructures,*** access to global investor networks, regulatory guidance, localized marketing support, and soft-landing services in target countries;

(ca) synergies with any future Union legal framework facilitating a pan-European corporate status, including a possible "28th regime", with a view to fostering partnerships between universities, research institutes, technology transfer offices and innovative companies established and registered under such a framework, in particular, SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups, to accelerate the transition from lab to market, to improve access to research and technology infrastructures and expertise, and to support the commercialisation of research results, thereby strengthening innovation-driven ecosystems;

(n) other actions to support the development of innovation ecosystems and connectivity including studies, benchmarking, mutual learning between innovation actors and coordination of innovation policies.

Chapter V

European Research Area

Article 14

Reforming and enhancing the European R&I system

To support the realisation of the European Research Area (ERA), the Specific Programme shall assist ***and incentivise*** Member States in achieving the objectives set out in the Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe[27], ***by supporting reforms of public research systems, safeguarding scientific independence, and promoting access to research and innovation throughout the Union. It shall do so*** by supporting actions aligned with ERA objectives and priority areas for joint action, ***contributing to European Cooperation in Science and Technology, including through COST Actions*** and by promoting ***and*** upholding ***the*** ERA values and principles, as established in the Pact.

Article 15

Widening participation and ERA integration

1. The Specific Programme shall support ***the implementation of*** a truly integrated ***ERA*** in the Union, addressing especially the third and fourth priority areas of the Pact for R&I ***[reference to the Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe], enhancing*** access to research and innovation excellence across the Union and ***advancing concerted research and innovation*** investments and reforms. Disparities between leading and less advanced countries in terms of R&I shall be tackled through ***actions and*** activities building a solid science base ***by*** connecting actors and ecosystems, ***but also*** encourage structural policy reforms at national and regional level***s*** aimed at improving the attractiveness of research

[27] Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/2122 of 26 November 2021 on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe, OJ L 431, 2.12.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2021/2122/oj.

careers, ***intra-European connections,*** internationalisation, governance of R&I institutions***, effectiveness of management and*** matching activities with Union initiatives.

2. ***To deliver on these objectives, the Programme shall provide support under the following broadlines:***

    a. ***capacity building measures as referred to in Article 19(5)a of Regulation XXX (EU)…/… [Horizon Europe Regulation];***

    b. ***ERA integration measures as referred to in Article 19(5)b of Regulation XXX (EU)…/… [Horizon Europe Regulation];***

3. ***The capacity building measures referred to in paragraph 2(a) shall, at least, include activities such as:***

    a. ***Teaming, to create new centres of excellence or upgrade existing ones in eligible countries, building on partnerships between internationally leading research institution and partner institutions;***

    b. ***Twinning, to significantly strengthen universities or research organisations from eligible countries in a defined field, by linking them with internationally leading research institutions from other Member States or associated countries;***

    c. ***ERA Chairs, to support universities or research organisations from eligible countries to attract and maintain high-quality human resources under the direction of an outstanding researcher and research manager (the 'ERA Chair holder'), and to implement structural changes to achieve excellence on a sustainable basis;***

    d. ***European Excellence Initiative (EEI), to empower universities further to be actors of change in research and innovation in order to raise excellence in science and in value creation through deeper and geographically inclusive cooperation in alliances of higher education institutions;***

    e. ***Pathways to Synergies, to provide support for setting up the interfaces between two different funding systems, where barriers still occur due to the mismatches of regional versus European approaches, with the main goal of the pathways being to move formerly single beneficiaries of regional funding programmes out of isolation via cross-border collaboration and prepare for participation in Horizon Europe calls;***

    f. ***Dissemination and Exploitation Support Facility, to help beneficiaries to improve the effectiveness of their dissemination and exploitation, by improving the efforts towards knowledge diffusion, technology uptake and other spill-over effects;***

    g. ***Excellence Hubs, to strengthen regional innovation excellence, through innovation ecosystems in widening countries and beyond, by teaming up, and creating robust linkages between academia, businesses, governments and civil society;***

    h. ***ERA Talents, to boost interoperability of careers and employability of research and innovation talents across sectors, with a centre of gravity in widening countries, with a focus on cross-sectoral talent circulation and academiabusiness collaboration for knowledge transfer.***

4. ***The ERA integration measures referred to in paragraph 2(b) shall, at least, include activities such as:***

   a. ***ERA Excellence grants, to support above-threshold, excellent collaborative projects under Pillar II that could not be funded due to budgetary constraints; to be applied to consortia coordinated by an entity established in a widening or transition country, or in which at least half of the participating entities are established in such countries;***

   b. ***Mutual learning and experience sharing for Twinning and Teaming, to provide top-up funding to the projects where the internationally leading research institution is an entity from a transition country in order to support experience sharing and mutual learning between widening countries and transition countries;***

   c. ***Dedicated National Contact Point support;***

   d. ***The EIC Pre-Accelerator shall boost the innovation potential of early-stage deep-tech startups in widening and transition countries by enhancing their business, investor, and technology readiness to secure funding from different sources.***

Article 16

Research and technology infrastructures

1. ***In order to foster the free movement of knowledge and technology and attractive research careers and mobility, in line with the values and principles of the ERA and Pact for R&I, the Programme shall support the development, modernisation, improvement and integration of excellent research and technology infrastructures across the Union.*** The funding of the Research and Technology Infrastructures shall ***be based on the criteria of excellence and, solely for Technology Infrastructures, on Union strategic interest. It shall*** contribute to equip the Union with a strong and coherent ecosystem of world-class sustainable ***and accessible*** facilities and services, building on prioritised pan-European infrastructures ***across the Union and accessible to all stakeholders, including SMEs and startups. These infrastructures will be*** complementary ***to*** state-of-the-art national ***and regional*** capacities and using funding instruments, including European partnerships ***and the Regulation (EU) …/… [ECF]***. The Programme shall contribute up to 20% of the building costs of critical new worldclass capacities of European research and technology infrastructures.

Chapter VI

Transitional and final provisions

Transitional and final provisions

Article 18b

Review and evaluation

1. ***In addition to the evaluation requirements set out in the [Performance Framework Regulation], the Commission shall carry out comprehensive and transparent evaluations that shall reflect the duration of the work programmes, and include at least the interim and final evaluations, to assess the Programme's performance, uptake, efficiency, coherence and Union added value of the actions funded, and the effectiveness of its governance arrangements and implementation structures, in accordance with Article 33a of Regulation (EU) …/… [Horizon Europe Regulation].***
2. ***The Commission shall make the conclusions of the evaluations public and shall present them to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions in a timely manner.***
3. ***The conclusions of those evaluations shall, where appropriate, be accompanied by a legislative proposal to amend this Decision.***

Article 19

Repeal

Decision (EU) No 764/2021 is repealed with effect from 1 January 2028.

Article 20

Transitional provisions

2. This Decision shall not affect the continuation or modification of the actions concerned, until their closure, under Decision (EU) 2021/764/EU, which shall continue to apply to those actions until their closure.
3. The financial envelope for the Specific Programme may also cover technical and administrative assistance expenses necessary to ensure the transition between the Specific Programme and the measures adopted under its Decision (EU) 2021/764.

Article 21

Entry into force and application

This Decision shall enter into force on the twentieth day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

It shall apply from 1 January 2028.

Done at Brussels,

For the Council

The President

Explanatory Note

Horizon Europe 2028-2034

Proposal for a Regulation establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, for the period 2028-2034 2025/0543 (COD)

Rapporteur: Christian Ehler (EPP)

Proposal for a Council decision establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe period 2028-2034 2025/0544 (CNS)

Rapporteur: René Repasi (S&D)

Background

Horizon Europe is the European Union's framework programme for research and innovation. It funds everything from frontier research and individual researchers to international research collaborations, technological development and research infrastructure. It also supports research addressing major societal challenges, helping to generate knowledge that may not emerge through private investment alone and providing the scientific foundations for Europe's long-term competitiveness.

In July 2025, the European Commission proposed a €175 billion budget for Horizon Europe for 2028–2034, alongside a new European Competitiveness Fund (ECF). Its proposal sought to connect research more closely to Europe's industrial and competitiveness priorities, while strengthening the Commission's role in setting thematic priorities and shaping calls.

The European Parliament's negotiating position seeks to preserve Horizon Europe as an autonomous, excellence-based research programme while strengthening its scientific governance, supporting researchers and research ecosystems, enabling effective coordination and pathways into the ECF, and ensuring that European research continues to sufficiently address societal challenges. The compromise agreed at shadow-rapporteur level is scheduled for a vote in the ITRE Committee on *10 November 2026*.

Key elements of the Parliament's position

1. Horizon Europe's autonomy:

The Parliament's position establishes separate but coordinated governance and programming structures for Horizon Europe and the ECF. Horizon's collaborative research and innovation activities under Pillar II would retain its own work programmes and research-based selection criteria, rather than having its priorities determined by the ECF's industrial policy agenda. Coordination is maintained through a mirrored window architecture, with aligned thematic windows (Horizon's Competitiveness Windows would carry the same titles and Horizon's Society Windows would broadly match the themes of the ECF Policy Windows) and joint meetings of the corresponding programme committees. This is intended to connect research with industrial deployment, giving results from Horizon projects a recognisable counterpart where they can be taken forward in the ECF, without making Horizon a funding reserve for the Competitiveness Fund.

This coordinated implementation is reflected also in the ECF, such as through Horizon Europe Pathway Actions in the ECF. These would mainly be grants, designed around specific Horizon results, and defined broadly enough to reflect how follow-up needs differ across technologies, disciplines, sectors and societal challenges. Parts of the ECF budget could also be allocated to Horizon European Partnerships to ensure results or technologies developed under Horizon can be scaled up by private partners in the consortium. Finally, the position ties the EIC to InvestEU in three ways:

- EIC Programme Managers would help build synergies between EIC Challenges and InvestEU.
- The chair of the ECF's InvestEU Investment Committee would sit on the EIC Fund's supervisory board.
- EIC grantees would have access to ECF project advisory services.

Together, these measures would make it easier for EIC companies to move on to InvestEU financing.

A clearer civilian boundary for dual-use research. The position recognises that civilian research can produce results with potential defence applications, without making defence relevance the starting point for Horizon funding. Projects would be submitted and assessed on civilian objectives and criteria; if results later prove

relevant to defence, the civilian research can continue under Horizon. Further defence-specific development and deployment would be financed through the appropriate instrument, with a route for successful Horizon projects to be taken forward through a fast-track procedure under the ECF's defence programme.

Consistent rules on international participation: Beyond the defence-specific links, the position aligns how both the Horizon Programme and the ECF handle openness to international cooperation. Association would still be arranged for each programme separately. The grounds for restricting participation in specific projects, however, would be aligned as far as the different nature of the two programmes allows. Both regulations would allow targeted restrictions where needed to protect the Union's autonomy, and both would provide specific grounds for restrictions in actions affecting security, defence or public order.

Clear and dedicated space for societal research: The position ensures that research on societal challenges has a dedicated and clearly defined space, more on equal footing with the competitiveness agenda. The four Society Windows set a clear scope and have dedicated budgets for their implementation.

2. Scientific and innovation expertise in the design of collaborative research:

The Commission proposal concentrated thematic priority-setting and call preparation within the Commission. The Parliament's compromise introduces a new expert-led governance model for Pillar II, covering both Competitiveness and Society priorities. A High-Level Council of at least 30 members, reflecting disciplinary, geographical, gender and professional diversity, would advise the Commission on strategic orientations, thematic priorities and potential European Partnerships.

Lead Experts, supported by teams with relevant scientific or innovation expertise, would take the initiative in drafting call topics and monitoring implementation. They would consult the relevant research communities and present draft topics to the Programme Committee of Member States experts, while the Commission retains responsibility for adopting calls. Work programmes would be adopted as delegated acts, with individual calls adopted as implementing acts. The model aims to bring research expertise closer to the design of funding opportunities without removing public oversight or Member States' role.

3. A more ambitious budget:

The Parliament's negotiating position calls for a €200 billion budget in current prices for 2028–2034, compared with the Commission's proposed €175 billion in current prices and the further cuts put forward by the Irish Presidency to €158 billion. It strengthens the relative and absolute support for Pillar I and the European Research Council, while ensuring a clear budgetary identity of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, as well as strengthening the EIC. The overall budget share of Pillar II has been strengthened, reflecting the need for strengthening competitiveness-oriented research and innovation while creating a dedicated space for societal challenges with a stronger allocation for the Society Windows, to ensure the two dimensions are supported in balance. It also fixes a 3.3% budgetary share for widening participation and spreading excellence, as well as embedding geographical balance more firmly across the programme.

The position provides for funding for the remaining R&I activities of the five existing EU Missions until 2030, covering climate adaptation, climate-neutral cities, cancer, oceans and soil health. The Commission's proposed "Moonshots" have been redesigned as new mission-oriented initiatives, with any future instrument to be established through a delegated act, ensuring Parliament and Council involvement. Lead Experts will manage the moonshots, building on bottom-up proposals towards portfolios that address socio-technical challenges, and mandatory stakeholder and citizen engagement further strengthen participatory governance.

4. Protecting scientific excellence and researchers' opportunities:

- **European Research Council (ERC):** Restored and strengthened autonomy of the ERC Scientific Council and its President, reinforced administrative independence, and preventing additional tasks being delegated to other Union structures beyond those specified in the legislation. The position also opens the possibility of blind evaluation for individual research grants and calls on the Commission to assess whether the ERC could become a standalone Union body. The objective is to protect excellence-driven, investigator-led research from excessive political or administrative direction.
- **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA):** The position preserves the bottom-up nature and distinct budgetary identity of the MSCA, resisting a shift towards top-down thematic priorities. It also strengthens provisions on researchers' working conditions and career prospects. This matters specifically because Europe's ability to attract and retain talent depends not only on funding research projects, but also on providing researchers with sustainable career paths.

- **European Innovation Council (EIC):** Strengthened role of the EIC Board, giving it responsibility for establishing the overall strategy, investment guidelines and profiles for Programme Managers. These managers would have operational independence to design and propose challenge-based calls, moving the EIC closer to an ARPA-like agile, mission-oriented model for supporting high-risk, high-potential innovation and supported by a dedicated implementation structure comparable to the ERC Executive Agency.
- **Researchers at risk:** A new European support scheme combines fellowship opportunities with coordination, networking, peer learning and capacity-building for institutions and national schemes. It is intended to provide a more coordinated response to threats to researchers and academic freedom, rather than relying solely on individual, short-term interventions.

5. Research ecosystems, European Partnerships and wider participation:

- **A Sectoral Plan for the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSHA):** The proposal addresses the lack of coordination across the SSHA research landscape and the need for a long-term shared strategic research agenda at European level. A pilot initiative would map existing capacities, connect stakeholders and develop a common agenda for future cooperation. A full Sectoral Plan could follow a positive independent evaluation, enabling research institutions to jointly define bottom-up priorities for the sector as a whole, building on complementary strengths to foster excellent, long-term cross-border collaboration. This staged approach seeks to build a shared research agenda from the bottom up, ensuring that its design supports broad participation across the SSHA research community.
- **Building better ecosystems for competitiveness:** Through the expert-led approach and the new Fast Track instruments for bottom-up collaborative research, the Programme will contribute more effectively to developing excellent collaborative research ecosystems across the Union. Increased investments in infrastructures will underpin those ecosystems by ensuring access for excellent researchers to world-leading infrastructures, forming the basis of the Union's competitiveness.
- **Widening participation and the European Research Area:** Beyond the 3.3% budgetary share, geographical balance is integrated more systematically across the programme rather than treating it solely as a separate funding objective under Pillar IV. It also includes measures such as ERA Excellence Grants for excellent collaborative proposals that could not be funded under Pillar II because of budget constraints, alongside support for National Contact Points and an EIC pre-accelerator for early-stage deep-tech companies in widening and transition countries.
- **International cooperation and research security:** International cooperation remains the bedrock of the Programme, including through a new category of trusted partners and provisions covering associated countries, while maintaining safeguards such as on research security and respect for academic freedom. A system is introduced to flag calls where research results may be subject to export controls, informing applicants without automatically restricting eligibility or creating separate award procedures.

Next steps

The compromise agreed at shadow-rapporteur level is scheduled for a vote in the European Parliament's ITRE Committee on *10 November 2026*. If adopted, the committee is expected to approve a mandate to enter into interinstitutional negotiations.

The start of interinstitutional negotiations will depend on the Council reaching agreement on the overall MFF.

The text in this document reflects Parliament's negotiated position ahead of the committee vote; it has not yet been formally adopted by Parliament.