Council of the European Union

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'A' ITEM NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Horizon Europe Package: Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2028-2034 a) Framework Programme and its rules for participation and dissemination b) Specific programme implementing Horizon Europe *- Partial general approach*

INTRODUCTION

1. On 16 July 2025, the Commission published the proposals for the Horizon Europe "package": the Regulation of the EP and of the Council establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (the Framework Programme)[1], and the Council Decision on establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe (the Specific Programme)[2].

2. The Commission proposal on the Framework Programme envisages a financial envelope of €175 billion in current prices for its implementation for the 2028-2034 period.

3. In order to ensure a seamless investment journey, the Commission proposes to establish a tight link to the European Competitiveness Fund, especially through collaborative research and innovation activities which will support the ECF policy windows.

4. The European Parliament's Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) is responsible for these proposals. Mr Christian Ehler (EPP, DE) has been appointed rapporteur for the Framework Programme and Mr René Repasi (S&D, DE) has been appointed rapporteur for the Specific Programme.

5. On 12 January 2026, the European Court of Auditors delivered its opinion on the proposals[3].

6. On 22 January 2026, the European Economic and Social Committee delivered its opinion on the proposals[4].

7. On 7 May 2026, the European Committee of the Regions delivered its draft opinion on the proposals[5].

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1 12007/25 REV 1.
2 12005/25 REV 1.
3 5280/26.
4 9403/26.
5 9391/26.

II. PROGRESS MADE IN THE COUNCIL

8. The Competitiveness Council held dedicated policy debates on thematic areas linked to Horizon Europe at its meetings on 30 September 2025, 9 December 2025, 27 February 2026 and on 29 May 2026. The policy debates provided general guidance and covered the topics of research and innovation for dual use, security and defence, the future European Partnerships, strategic priority-setting and widening in view of reaching a Council position.

9. During the Danish and Cyprus Presidencies, the Working Party on Research (RWP) examined nine Presidency compromise texts of both proposals.

10. At its meeting of 24 June 2026, COREPER confirmed the texts of the general approaches and invited the Council to reach agreement on the texts as an A item at a forthcoming meeting. It also confirmed the text of a statement as set out in ADD 1 to this note and invited the Council to approve the text of that statement as an A item at a forthcoming meeting.

11. Since the proposed Framework Programme and Specific Programme are part of the package of proposals linked to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), all the provisions in the texts with budgetary implications or corresponding to the elements that form part of horizontal negotiations on the MFF have been bracketed, and are therefore excluded from the partial General Approach pending further progress on the MFF. These provisions appear between square brackets in the text. The provisions on widening measures form part of an overall balance and must be read in the light of the current state of negotiations on the overall MFF package.

12. It is to be noted that the provisions concerning the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) are without prejudice to the Council's final position on European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) to be established at a later stage, following the examination of the forthcoming Commission proposal for the revision of the EIT Regulation. In this regard, a Council statement is contained in ADD 1 to this note.

III. STATE OF PLAY IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

13. The rapporteurs' draft reports on the Framework Programme and on the Specific Programme were issued on 3 March 2026 and were presented at the ITRE meeting on 13 March 2026, formally launching the Committee's substantive scrutiny and amendment phase. The adoption of the final reports by ITRE is currently foreseen for 10 September 2026, with a vote on the European Parliament's negotiating mandate by the Plenary expected at the session on 5-8 October 2026.

IV. MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENCY COMPROMISE TEXT

14. The main elements of the compromise text can be summarised as follows:

a) The proposed **governance** model strengthens the Council's and Member States' involvement in the strategic priority-setting process of Horizon Europe. The process would start with advice from the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) on R&I orientations. This advice would be based on foresight and evidence-based analysis provided inter alia by the Commission services. This advice from ERAC would then feed into the preparation of a multiannual strategic document by the Commission. The strategic configuration of the Programme Committee in its advisory role would provide recommendations on the overall strategic direction and priorities of the Programme and coordinate via joint meetings with the General Committee of the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), notably on Pillar II.

b) Among the **horizontal principles**, the compromise text added paragraphs on the promotion of cross-border collaboration, on the Programme's dual-use by design approach, on the implementation of gender equality by default and on synergies with other Union programmes.

c) The compromise text strengthens the provisions on **European Partnerships** by giving the Council or its advisory bodies a guiding role in the definition of the partnerships' areas and by calling for coherence with other Union programmes, notably for deployment activities. The text also clarifies the contractual arrangements on which partnerships should be based, the types and modalities of contributions and introduces a stronger lifecycle approach, including monitoring, transition and phasing-out arrangements. The text also provides for a maximum amount of Pillar II to be allocated to the various partnership instruments. Partnerships are framed as part of a coherent portfolio approach and are expected to support the full research and innovation value chain, including deployment activities financed under other Union and national programmes.

d) On **research security**, the compromise text introduces a dedicated definition and a specific article setting out the framework for the identification, assessment and mitigation of risks linked to research and innovation activities. It further clarifies the measures that may be applied where justified, to determine inter alia the participation restrictions, the requirements related to results and the additional safeguards. At the same time, these same provisions continue to promote a risk-based and proportionate approach throughout programme implementation and to preserve the principle of being as open as possible and as closed as necessary.

e) On **Pillar I (Excellent Science)**, the text features modifications related to the working arrangements and term of office of the European Research Council (ERC) President and on the composition and term of office of the ERC Scientific Council. Both for ERC and Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), a specific focus on early-career researchers is added.

f) On **Pillar II (Collaborative research and innovation)**, the focus of the **"Society" component** was clarified, including the Programme's support to the research and innovation parts of EU Missions and the New European Bauhaus (NEB), as well as the coherence with the "Competitiveness" component. The compromise text also introduces provisions aimed at ensuring a balanced approach between bottom-up collaborative research actions and predefined topics from strategic areas.

g) On **Pillar III (Innovation),** the role of the **European Innovation Council (EIC)** programme managers is further specified, including with regard to the management of high-risk innovation portfolios. Importantly, the revised text includes the possibility for the **EIC to support innovation in critical deep-tech with a focus on defence applications**, up to a capped amount of the budget of Pillar III, while clarifying complementarities with the ECF.

h) On **Pillar IV (European Research Area)**, the Council or its advisory bodies are given a role in defining the areas for supporting the construction or major upgrade costs of research and technology infrastructures. The text further clarifies the strategic role of relevant infrastructure fora and introduces criteria linked to evidence of new capacities and their effective implementation.

i) On **Widening**, following a partial unbracketing of relevant provisions by the Presidency, further specifications are inserted with regard to the supporting measures, notably the continuation of successful instruments and the possible establishment of new ones. The compromise text also reinforces the objective of sustained convergence in research and innovation capacities and continued advancement across the Union. To a large number of delegations, the agreement on these provisions is closely linked with the current state of negotiations on the overall MFF package**.**

j) On the **Rules for participation and dissemination**, wording on the eligibility criteria has been clarified, together with further refinements to the provisions on the evaluation of proposals.

k) On **comitology**, the examination procedure has been added for all configurations, except for the work programme of the ERC. A no-opinion clause is inserted, preventing the adoption of an implementing acts where the Programme Committee delivers no opinion.

III. CONCLUSION

15. The Council (Transport, Telecommunications and Energy) is invited to:

- reach agreement on the Framework Programme partial General Approach as set out in document 10464/26, as an A point;
- reach agreement on the Specific Programme partial General Approach as set out in document 10465/26, as an A point;
- approve the text of the statement as set out in ADD 1 to this note, as an A point.