



News and Policy Developments in the area of ‘Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment’

Looking ahead to the next Framework Programme

Horizon Europe, at least in the current 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework, has just two years left to run. The [interim evaluation of Horizon Europe](#), published earlier this year, describes Horizon Europe as a major driver of economic and societal benefits, with a projected 10X return on each euro invested in terms of GDP by 2045. Publication of the final set of two-year (2026-2027) work programmes is imminent and the last two years of a Framework Programme are generally regarded as preparation for the next one.

Framework Programme 2028-2034 (FP10) will keep the Horizon Europe name. As a brand Horizon or Horizon Europe is widely recognised—why change a name when the current one is so successful. Nonetheless major changes are coming.

In July the Commission set out its plans for FP10: **Horizon Europe 2028 - 2034: twice bigger, simpler, faster and more impactful**. Development has been influenced by several high-level reports (available on the Commission page) and concern over competitiveness (the EU lagging in its commercialisation of science outputs) but fears that more basic research would lose out seem unfounded. On the other hand, close alignment of some areas to the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) may result in challenges for UK and other Associated Countries. In contrast to previous programmes (Horizon 2020: “Open Science, Open Innovation; Open to the World”) the forthcoming one may not be fully open. NICPs understand the UK is potentially interested in association to FP10 but this will depend on its openness and the value for money association would provide. The ECF is a big unknown and may not be fully open for association.

What’s in the draft proposal for FP10?

In terms of operation, there is an even stronger commitment to ‘simplification’ than previously (Figure 1), reducing the administrative burden on applicants and projects. The Commission is also determined to speed up evaluation, with a target of seven months from submission to commencement for successful projects. Lump sum funding, which was introduced in recent years, will be used increasingly. This provides a fixed amount to cover the entire project and eliminate the detailed financial reporting requirements, and this is estimated to reduce project administrative costs by 14% to 30% over a project's lifetime.



Figure 1. Summary of policy priorities and simplification measures across framework programmes.

In terms of structure, much remains the same but with changes. The familiar ‘pillar structure’ is maintained but with the European Research Area becoming a fourth pillar.

- **Pillar I ‘Excellent Science’** covers the [European Research Council \(ERC\)](#) (frontier science), [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#) (training and development) and science for EU policies through the EU’s [Joint Research Centre](#).
- **Pillar II ‘Competitiveness and Society’** aims to support collaborative research and innovation in areas of high societal impact.
- **Pillar III ‘Innovation’** focuses on promoting the development of new products, services and business models, with the [European Innovation Council \(EIC\)](#) funding high-risk disruptive projects in stages,
- **Pillar IV ‘European Research Area’** aims to support a unified European Research Area (ERA), promoting excellence and impact, and research in [‘Widening Countries’](#), as well as the development and operation of [research and technology infrastructures](#).

Pillar 2 “Competitiveness and Society” aims to support collaborative research and innovation much like the current Pillar II, but it will hold a different name (and will be closely tied to the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF)). A first, “competitiveness” component would fund research and innovation to support the ECF’s four proposed policy areas: clean transition and industrial decarbonisation; health, bioeconomy and biotechnology; digital; and resilience, defence and space. It is unclear whether this means Pillar 2 will also fund defence and dual-use projects. €19.5bn is earmarked for Health, Biotech, Agriculture and Bioeconomy. This is a small increase versus the budget for the current Horizon Europe Cluster 6.

With a proposed **€175 billion** budget, the new programme will be based on four pillars.



¹ Consistent with activities under the European Competitiveness Fund

Figure 2. Proposed structure and budget of FP10

A “European Competitiveness Fund” is proposed to run in parallel to Horizon Europe ensuring 'a seamless investment journey from research to start-up, scale up, deployment and global manufacturing'. It would mobilise an EU financial toolbox (loans, grants, equity, blended finance, procurement and guarantees) and provide advisory support. UK and others may not (or may not have option to) associate to this; UK companies based as they are in a ‘Third Country’ would not have access to EU non-grant funding, as is currently the case for the non-grant parts of the EIC Accelerator (SME funding) under the current programme.

A second, “society” component would support “bottom-up research” on societal challenges such as migration, democracy and disinformation. This component would also incorporate research and

innovation support for the EU missions and the New European Bauhaus Facility.

Additionally, tightly connected to the European Competitiveness Fund, Horizon Europe, will have the capacity to develop ‘moonshot projects’, taking research to demonstration and real-world deployment, supported by pooled funding from EU (Horizon Europe and the European Competitiveness Fund), national, public, and private sources. These would be designed to position Europe as a global leader in strategic fields, and drive progress in areas such as: next-generation AI, data sovereignty, zero water pollution and ocean observation.

Roadmap towards Nature Credits

In July the European Commission published a [Roadmap towards Nature Credits](#), outlining a step-by-step approach to support the development of high-integrity nature credit schemes in the EU and internationally. Nature credits could complement public funding and help mobilise additional resources for biodiversity, while ensuring environmental and social safeguards. As part of the roadmap the Commission will set up an expert group to provide inputs, expertise and share best practices on designing governance frameworks for nature credits, with particular considerations for smallholders and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. It will carry out an EU-wide evaluation of supply and demand for nature credits before seeking inputs on how to foster nature credit markets. A pilot project on nature credits will be launched and supported by EU funds. The Commission will also adopt the first carbon farming methodologies under the [EU Regulation on Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming](#) with mandatory co-benefits on biodiversity.

European Biotech Act

The [European Biotech Act](#) aims to make the EU regulatory environment more conducive to innovation, attract innovators and investors, and make it easier for spin-offs, start-ups and scale-ups to bring biotechnologies from the laboratory to the factory and onto the market. The Act will also include measures complementary to regulatory aspects. For example, the Commission will create an AI-powered interactive tool to help researchers and innovators navigate the EU regulatory landscape, particularly in the early stages of research and development. **Part I** was published on 16 December. [FACTSHEET - BIOTECH](#)

Choose Europe for life sciences

A strategy to position the EU as the world’s most attractive place for life sciences by 2030 ([COM\(2025\) 525 final](#)). The Strategy proposes the following actions:

1. **Optimising the research and innovation ecosystem** through a plan to facilitate funding for multi-country clinical trials. It will also promote a [One Health approach](#) to research and innovation including microbiome-based solutions funded under the Horizon Europe work programmes 2026-27.
2. **Enabling rapid market access for life science innovations** including the EU Biotech Act that will create a more innovation-friendly framework across biotech sectors.
3. **Boosting trust, uptake and use of innovation** by stimulating the procurement of life science innovation in areas such as climate change adaptation and next-generation vaccines.

| | Health | Food | Agriculture & Fisheries | Bio-based | Environment |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| Examples of applications | Medicines, Diagnostics, Medical Devices | Personalised Nutrition, Food Ingredients, Food biotech | Animal and aqua feed, Plant Breeding, Biopesticides | Bioplastics, Biomaterials, Bio-based Chemicals, Bioenergy | Bioremediation, Carbon Capture, Ecosystem Restoration |

For companies needing access to resources in the biotech and biomanufacturing sector, [Biotech and biomanufacturing - Your Europe](#) is a useful **hub page** that provides information, links, tools and resources. It covers human and veterinary medicinal products, food, feed, and consumer products safety and intellectual property, and signposts to research and technology infrastructures.

