



# POSITION ON Preserving Key Values of European Partnerships in FP10

For Research Funding and Performing  
Organisations and Researchers

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**European Partnerships are much more than a funding tool: they are indispensable instruments of international scientific collaboration and policy alignment.**

Partnerships are a key tool for pooling national resources and creating leverage for both EU Member States and the European Union as a whole. They support the alignment of national, regional, and sectoral research and innovation (R&I) agendas and incentivise cross-sector collaboration with industry as well as civil society, amongst others. Furthermore, they facilitate the participation of applicants with limited international experience by allowing them to engage familiar national and/or regional institutions while participating in EU-level initiatives.

National research funding and performing organisations belonging to Science Europe play a fundamental role in the implementation of the European Partnerships. Through these activities, they help build the R&I community and establish long-term R&I collaborations across borders and disciplines, making a significant contribution to the development of the European Research Area.

The [recent inter-institutional discussions](#) indicate some concerning proposals with regards to the establishment of Partnerships in the upcoming 2028–2034 Framework Programme. While the need for a coherent approach and some degree of rationalisation is acknowledged, the current direction poses a risk that the instrument may become less, or in certain cases, no longer suitable for the participation of national research funding and performing organisations and the researchers and innovation actors they represent. Consequently, the instrument may lose its significant European added value.

Science Europe notes the following policy directions with concern:

### **Centralisation/standardisation of financial management**

Ongoing policy discussions indicate that the European Commission aims to consolidate the governance of Partnerships through approaches such as Central Financial Management (CFM) and other types of standardised implementation. For many national research funding and performing organisations, this will provide severe feasibility challenges in implementation, given the diversity of national and regional funding systems as well as national legislation related to the transfer of funds. This could severely limit participation, potentially making their future participation, and consequently, those of their research communities, impossible.

Furthermore, reducing the involvement of national governments and research funding organisations in the development, implementation, and governance of Partnerships will weaken the relation between the instrument and researchers. This would make partnerships less attractive for research communities in general.

### **Overt rationalisation, reduction, and large consortia**

The proposals of both the [European Commission](#) (Art. 11) and the [European Parliament](#) (Art. 11) call for a low number of partnerships focusing on achieving critical mass – including proposals to introduce minimum thresholds. Such reduction

of partnerships, and their re-orientation towards potentially larger initiatives, and quantifiable economic impact carries several risks.

A more strategic approach towards thematic portfolios is welcome. To ensure that these novel portfolios benefit partnerships, rationalisation should carefully consider which areas should be integrated. The merger of potentially disjointed areas may reduce focus, which may result in less clear impact and have negative implications for learning across projects.

Furthermore, this may result omitting fundamental research-related collaborations in this format, as well as partnerships involving key disciplines – such as Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts. Additionally, new entrants could find access to large consortia – managed by the European Commission, rather than their national/regional institutions – excessively difficult, and thus, may end up being discouraged from participating.

The difficulty of access could be exacerbated for all participants as the gap from start-up initiative to minimum threshold will be increased significantly, compared to the current Framework Programme. Furthermore, broader and more complex, large partnerships could actually increase the administrative burden, potentially undermining the intended benefits of simplification.

**Science Europe urges policy makers to enable the participation of relevant stakeholders in the development, governance and implementation of Partnerships.**

Given the importance of this instrument for international scientific collaboration, it is crucial that research funding and performing organisations maintain their complete involvement in the further development, as well as in the implementation and governance, of this instrument, under the upcoming Framework Programme.

These organisations are able to provide crucial insights for the negotiations, given their experience of participating in European Partnerships and their engagement with the development of this instrument in the previous programme, evidenced by the dialogue within Science Europe, prior to the launch of Horizon Europe 2021–2027. Their broad involvement with a wide range of collaborative initiatives within the EU (ERA-Nets, Joint Programming Initiatives), as well as funder networks at European and global levels further supports their engagement.



Science Europe is currently working on evidence-based recommendations on the development of partnerships under FP10, to help ensure that they remain effective, inclusive, and support EU strategic priorities in conjunction with the objectives of the European Research Area.



**Science Europe and its Member Organisations call all co-legislators for the careful reconsideration of the overall policy direction taken in the current FP10 negotiations towards European Partnerships, to preserve the value of this key instrument.**

Science Europe is the association of major research funding and research performing organisations in Europe. We define long-term perspectives for European research and champion best-practice approaches that enable high-quality research for knowledge advancement and the needs of society.

Our vision for the next Horizon Europe is a Framework Programme that supports a robust research & innovation ecosystem providing the best conditions for excellent science and researchers.

More information is available at [www.scienceeurope.org](http://www.scienceeurope.org)

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