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Subject:	<i>Preparation of the Council (Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)) on 8-9 December 2025</i> 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 - Policy debate

Delegations will find attached a note from the Presidency on “*Strategic priorities for European research and innovation*” with a view to the Policy debate at the Competitiveness Council on 9 December 2025.

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**

Strategic priorities for European research and innovation

Europe faces a defining moment. According to the Draghi, Letta and Heitor reports, Europe is losing ground in research, innovation, investments and scale compared to global competitors. This directly impacts the Union's capacity to lead the way towards a sustainable and prosper future for all. Furthermore, the Single Market remains incomplete, burdened by regulatory complexity and national silos – undermining European competitiveness and cohesion.

Europe stands at a turning point. Our security, autonomy and competitiveness are challenged in ways we have not seen in many decades while new solutions are needed for securing the digital and green transition in the Union. In a world with increasing uncertainty, global challenges and crises, research and innovation play a key role in understanding current problems and in our ability to deliver jointly developed solutions to the Union's current challenges.

With collaboration based on fundamental values being Europe's greatest strength, we have the prerequisites to revitalise European scientific and technological leadership and deliver the innovation needed in a smarter and faster as well as more ambitious and strategic manner. This also means finding compromises and making agreements. We need to be able to use the EU framework programme as a common spearhead – tackling common challenges.

Clear strategic priorities with a clear European added value for our joint research and innovation efforts at European level are required to have a coherent and impactful response to current and upcoming challenges. This will require Member States and the European Commission, in dialogue with stakeholders, to consider which European strongholds and emerging areas need further prioritisation at European level through stronger public-private collaborations and larger partnerships and improved gearing of private contributions.

Even with EU funding for research and innovation constituting a minor amount of the complete funding for research and innovation in Europe, the framework programme for research and innovation has in the past set the direction for our shared efforts within research and innovation. Stronger strategic priorities in the next Horizon Europe could therefore also create better alignment between current policies at the European and national level within research and innovation. Strategic priorities have to be identified and selected in close collaboration with Member States, and, where relevant, with key stakeholders – ensuring that the chosen priorities have the needed buy-in of all.

The aim of this discussion will be for Members States to put forward the first set of main strategic priorities for research and innovation with a clear European added value as well as a reflection of which of these priorities would need to be addressed through larger partnerships that require European cooperation. The discussion on strategic priorities can be used as the foundation for further discussions on strategic priority-setting in the current negotiations on the next Horizon Europe.

In that context, Research Ministers are invited to share their views on the following key questions:

1. Which research and innovation priorities containing a clear European added value are needed to ensure strong European leadership and joint efforts going beyond national interests?
 2. Which priorities will require EU-funding as a frontrunner in setting long-term strategic objectives and thereby bring in substantial private investments through larger public-private partnerships?
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