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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT**

**Second biennial report on the implementation of the
Global Approach to Research and Innovation 2023-2025**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Communication on the Global Approach to Research and Innovation (R&I)¹ was adopted in May 2021, at a time when the world was considerably different from what it is today. Still, its broad objectives and principles remain valid, such as defending and promoting fundamental R&I values, working towards a level playing field and reciprocity in international R&I cooperation, tackling global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss and global health crises together, and adopting a nuanced and modulated approach to cooperating with non-EU countries and regions.

International R&I cooperation increases excellence and competitiveness, provides access to international expertise through mobility and cooperation, develops solutions to global challenges and promotes shared scientific and technical standards, thereby reducing trade barriers and increasing access to potential markets. It also builds political and diplomatic capital, and contributes to the EU's geopolitical objectives. Its promotion is enshrined in Article 180 (b) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The EU needs to be more assertive at pursuing its strategic interests in an age of geostrategic rivalries, while strengthening its cooperation with like-minded partners². The implementation of the Global Approach therefore needs to factor in both the new geopolitical realities and groundbreaking developments in science and technology. The first biennial implementation report, adopted in 2023, responded to such realities, for example by highlighting the EU support to Ukraine following the launch of Russia's full-scale illegal invasion.

Over the past two years, the EU has taken firm steps to respond to these challenges by adopting key initiatives which aim to ensure that the EU remains at the cutting-edge of innovation and that its R&I system remains both open and secure³. The EU is and will continue to be the guardian of multilateralism, a rules-based international order and evidence-informed policymaking – crucial in today's world to defend core principles of democracy, including more resilient and strong democratic societies. As the principles and values the EU stands for are increasingly under threat worldwide, more than ever before the EU must stand up for academic freedom and freedom of scientific research as well as for diversity, equity and inclusion. This includes promoting equality and non-discrimination for women as well as other groups at heightened risk of discrimination, and ensuring their full and effective participation in R&I systems. These values are not only a moral imperative, but are among the strongest assets the EU has in the global competition for talent.

¹ COM (2021) 252 final.

² https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/833e082a-0c39-4bc6-a119-e0760ebc7360_en?filename=mission-letter-zaharieva.pdf

³ Examples include the Economic Security Strategy (JOIN(2023) 20 final), the Council Recommendation on enhancing Research Security (C/2024/3510), the Joint Communication “*Strengthening EU Economic Security*” (JOIN(2025) 977 final), the Competitiveness Compass (COM(2025) 30 final), the Startups and Scaleups Strategy (SWD(2025) 138 final), the European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures (COM(2025) 497 final/2), the European Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Science (COM(2025) 724 final), the Clean Industrial Deal (COM(2025) 85 final), and the Choose Europe initiative (https://commission.europa.eu/topics/research-and-innovation/choose-europe_en).

This report offers an overview of the Commission's work in implementing the Global Approach to R&I, and the related Council Conclusions⁴ since the publication of the first biennial implementation report in 2023⁵. It aims to provide a snapshot of how the EU is responding to new challenges and demands in R&I in an increasingly competitive and volatile international landscape, thereby defending its strategic interests.

2. REAFFIRMING EU COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL OPENNESS AND FUNDAMENTAL VALUES IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Together with partners worldwide, the EU has implemented the Multilateral Dialogue on Principles and Values for International R&I Cooperation, resulting in the endorsement of the Brussels Statement at an international ministerial conference in February 2024. The Commission has suggested initiating the next phase of the dialogue, by broadening its geographic outreach and thematic breadth. The Commission has also begun to develop a European framework for science diplomacy, delivering a report with expert recommendations drawn up jointly by scientists and diplomats. With the association of New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, and Egypt to Horizon Europe, the EU has successfully continued to create strong links in R&I with key partners abroad.

2.1 Principles and values in international R&I cooperation

Following the launch of the Multilateral Dialogue on Principles and Values for International R&I Cooperation in July 2022, the Commission engaged with its global partners to discuss matters related to research excellence, knowledge valorisation, research security, and equitable R&I partnerships with low- and middle-income countries. This culminated in an international ministerial conference held under the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU in February 2024, which endorsed a ministerial statement on principles and values for international R&I cooperation, known as the Brussels Statement⁶.

Following the request in the Council conclusions on the Global Approach to R&I to develop a European Science Diplomacy Agenda⁷ and the subsequent discussion in the Competitiveness Council of July 2023, the Commission tasked a group of scientists and diplomats with putting forward specific recommendations for a future European framework for science diplomacy⁸. The recommendations developed by the 130 science diplomacy experts, proposing strategic, operational and enabling instruments needed to support

⁴ 12301/21 RECH 425.

⁵ For example, *Much more than a market* (the Letta report), *The Future of European Competitiveness* (the Draghi report), *Safer Together – Strengthening Europe's Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness* (the Niinistö report), *Align, Act, Accelerate* (the Heitor report).

⁶ See https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/94d6bb42-1fe7-478c-b6b4-d0be4dfb0204_en?filename=brussels-ministerial-statement-2024-02.pdf. The Republic of Türkiye endorsed the ministerial statement without the Annex.

⁷ 12301/21 RECH 425.

⁸ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/launch-eu-science-diplomacy-working-groups-results-call-expressions-interest-published-2023-12-06_en

European leadership in science diplomacy, were published in February 2025 in an expert report⁹. A major milestone in this process was the first European Science Diplomacy Conference in December 2023, which allowed the European science diplomacy community to reflect on a strategic approach¹⁰.

Targeted workshops and discussions, including on science diplomacy in the Mediterranean and transboundary Nile River water management, were supported by the Commission to show the value of science diplomacy in action. In October 2025, the first AU-EU Dialogue on Science Diplomacy was organised, leading to the recognition of science diplomacy as a new track in the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation between the African Union and the European Union. In addition, the Commission has supported the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance¹¹ which brings together leading institutions on the matter.

In April 2024, the EU signed up to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Ministerial Declaration on Transformative Science, Technology and Innovation Policies for a Sustainable and Inclusive Future, reinforcing shared principles and values in international R&I cooperation, including reciprocity, transparency, accountability, and mutual benefit¹². The EU is co-chairing the G7 Open Science working group contributing to international alignment and collaboration on open science policy development and implementation. The EU and its Member States have also provided support for researchers at risk, most notably through the SAFE project¹³.

In line with the European Parliament resolution of 17 January 2024, the Commission launched a dedicated study to provide an evidence base for a legislative proposal on promoting and protecting the freedom of scientific research in the EU, published in October 2025¹⁴. The Commission has internationally promoted the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity¹⁵ and the Global Code of Conduct for Equitable Research Partnerships¹⁶, has continued to organise the National Ethics Council (NEC) Forum twice a year, and has actively participated in the Volunteers in Research and Ethics (VolREthics)¹⁷ initiative. The implementation of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe¹⁸ has been a key step in advancing gender equality in R&I, including at international level.

2.2. The international dimension of Horizon Europe

Participation in the Framework Programme through association is the closest form of R&I cooperation with non-EU countries. In July 2023, New Zealand became the first country

⁹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/0841de12-0dd2-4459-b59c-050943c04acd_en

¹⁰ <https://eu-science-diplomacy.service-facility.eu/>

¹¹ <https://www.science-diplomacy.eu/>

¹² <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0501>.

¹³ <https://saferesearchers.eu/>

¹⁴ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0ad627da-a7ed-11f0-a7c5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

¹⁵ <https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/>

¹⁶ <https://www.globalcodeofconduct.org/>

¹⁷ <https://www.inserm.fr/en/ethics/volrethics/>

¹⁸ Implemented as of the calls for proposals with deadlines of 2022 onwards.

beyond the EU's vicinity to associate to Horizon Europe, followed by the United Kingdom and Canada in 2024 and the Republic of Korea, Switzerland, and Egypt in 2025. Association negotiations have been concluded with Japan and exploratory talks have been initiated with Australia.

Horizon Europe Pillar I stands out for its international dimension, with 8.7% of participants coming from non-associated non-EU countries, followed by Pillar II (5.5%), Pillar III (2.5%), and finally the Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area (WIDERA) Actions (2.4%). Associated countries host 11.8 % of participants in Pillar I, 9.7% of participants in Pillar II, 7.8% of participants in Pillar III and 14.8% of participants in WIDERA actions¹⁹.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), Horizon Europe's most international component, are essential for establishing international R&I partnerships. Among researchers selected under MSCA fellowships, 46% were non-EU, namely 37% from non-associated non-EU countries, and 9% from associated countries. MSCA represent about 50% of the total participation of organisations from non-associated non-EU countries in Horizon Europe. For many countries, over 50% of their total participation in Horizon Europe projects occurs through MSCA. A new Coordination and Support Action was launched in May 2025 to strengthen international cooperation and global participation in MSCA²⁰.

To leverage their role as nodes of international R&I cooperation, the EU has continued to finance transnational access to research infrastructures, including those run by the Commission's Joint Research Centre²¹, also for users from non-associated non-EU countries. The EU also promotes international access in the G7 Group of Senior Officials on Global Research Infrastructures²². In 2024, the Commission endorsed the Brisbane Statement²³ encouraging all research infrastructure stakeholders to intensify collaboration in international research infrastructures to address global challenges. In September 2025, the Commission adopted a European Strategy for Research and Technology Infrastructures that includes actions to strengthen their international dimension.

3. REBALANCING THE EU'S GLOBAL APPROACH TO R&I: TOWARDS A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD AND RECIPROCITY

To keep international R&I cooperation open and secure, the EU adopted a Council recommendation on enhancing research security in 2024 to work towards a level playing field in the European Research Area. The EU has taken firm steps to increase its resilience to foreign interference and coercion by carrying out assessments of critical technologies, promoting R&I investment in these areas, restricting access to Horizon Europe when strictly

¹⁹ Figures according to the Horizon Europe dashboard on 02/07/2025.

²⁰ MSCA Global Cooperation: Policy Enhancement and Strategic Promotion (<https://msca-glopol.eu/>)

²¹ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/tools-and-laboratories/open-access-jrc-research-infrastructures_en

²² <https://www.gsogri.org/>

²³ <https://icri2024.au/about-icri/brisbane-statement/>

needed, and putting new strategic partnerships in place.

Researchers are increasingly exposed to security risks when cooperating internationally, with European R&I being confronted with foreign interference and information manipulation, and the potential for misuse in ways that can affect the EU's security or infringe upon EU values and fundamental rights. With the Council recommendation on enhancing research security²⁴, adopted in May 2024, the EU now has a sound basis for addressing the security risks related to international R&I cooperation. With this recommendation, which covers not only the Commission and the Member States, but also public research funders and universities, the EU has developed, for the first time, a common definition of research security risks, together with a common approach to research risk assessment. In October 2025, the Commission organised the first European Flagship Conference on Research Security to facilitate the sharing of best practices.

The work on research security is part of a broader effort to improve the EU's economic security²⁵. In particular, research security should help to prevent technology leakage, namely the undesirable transfer of critical knowledge and technology through international academic cooperation, while at the same time preserving the EU's approach to academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

A key part of this work involves assessing the risks related to certain enabling or critical technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, advanced semiconductors and quantum, a process undertaken with the involvement of the Member States and other stakeholders. While these critical technology assessments go beyond R&I policy, the output of this work is set to also shape international R&I cooperation in the years ahead. The Commission is working with like-minded countries on economic security, promoting the EU's own critical technologies capabilities, and putting in place various safeguards to protect the EU against their potential misuse.

In January 2024, the Commission published a White Paper on options for enhancing support for research and development involving technologies with dual use potential²⁶. Since then, several strategic documents have provided further input into the reflection on dual use research and development, considering the risks of international R&I cooperation depending on the research rationale and dual use potential²⁷.

The Commission has also taken further steps to make Horizon Europe research security-proof, by limiting participation, on an exceptional basis, to entities from Member States and certain non-EU countries in the areas of quantum technologies, AI communication network

²⁴ C/2024/3510.

²⁵ See JOIN(2023) 20 final and JOIN(2025) 977 final.

²⁶ COM(2024) 27 final.

²⁷ See https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/new-publications-dual-use-provide-strategic-input-future-eu-ri-policies-2025-06-25_en

technologies, batteries, space and critical raw materials²⁸. In the Horizon Europe work programme 2023-2024, Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation was applied to 33 topics²⁹, whereas in the work programme 2025, it was applied to 37 topics in total. Further measures in place are, for example, additional obligations on the exploitation of research results and the Commission's right to object to the transfer of intellectual property (IP) to countries outside the EU and not associated to the Programme³⁰.

The Commission has also decided to restrict access to close-to-market research for non-associated non-EU countries where it was deemed that the framework conditions ensuring a level playing field in R&I cooperation were not in place³¹. Entities assessed as being high-risk suppliers of communication network equipment do not take part in actions linked to the development of communication network technologies, in line with the June 2023 Communication on the implementation of the 5G cybersecurity toolbox³².

4. POOLING GLOBAL EFFORTS TO TACKLE GLOBAL CHALLENGES TOGETHER

With respect to the green transition, the Commission has supported the development of an International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS), has continued to support the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA), and has adopted a new joint roadmap with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO. It co-led the Clean Hydrogen Mission and the Urban Transitions Mission under Mission Innovation, and has supported green growth knowledge platforms, while continuing to engage internationally, including in the G20 Initiative on Bioeconomy.

In the area of the digital transition, the Commission has advanced digital partnerships with global partners in areas such as AI, quantum computing, and connectivity. It has also supported global health activities, including through the third programme of the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (Global Health EDCTP3). Finally, the Commission is promoting innovation activities internationally through the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) as well as through knowledge valorisation.

4.1. Leading global efforts towards a just green transition

²⁸ Article 22(5) of the Horizon Europe Regulation makes it possible to limit participation to legal entities established in Member States or in specified associated or other non-EU countries as identified in the work programme to safeguard the EU's strategic assets, interests, autonomy or security. Restrictions can also be applied to entities established in countries that are eligible but that are controlled directly or indirectly by a non-eligible country or by an entity established in a non-eligible country.

²⁹ Including amendments approved in 2024. In addition, the European High Performance Computing (EuroHPC) Joint Undertaking made use of Article 22(5) in one action in its work programme 2023.

³⁰ Articles 39 and 40 of the Horizon Europe Regulation.

³¹ Article 22(6) of the Horizon Europe Regulation allows, where appropriate and justified, for the insertion of additional eligibility criteria to take account of specific policy requirements or the nature and objectives of the action in question.

³² C(2023) 4049 final.

The R&I investment through Horizon Europe helps to implement the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and other international agreements. This investment has also shaped the agendas and contributed to the work of a number of organisations at the science-policy interface³³. The importance of the EU's involvement also needs to be seen in the light of fundamental changes in the approach of the United States (US) regarding climate change, environmental issues, and the role of science in policy-making.

The Joint communication on the EU's International Ocean Governance Agenda³⁴ stressed the need to acquire considerable ocean knowledge in order to support sustainable management. A 2023 feasibility study found that knowledge is fragmented and often inadequate for urgent decision-making³⁵. In response, the Commission is following the work to establish the International Platform for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS) as a new catalytic mechanism to inform public and private decision-makers about sustainable ocean use and protection.

The Commission led the implementation of the 2022 All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance (AAORIA) declaration to support ocean research cooperation in the Atlantic. Five new partners (the United Kingdom, Norway, Iceland, Senegal and Ghana) have joined AAORIA, with its work focusing on increasing the resilience of coastal communities, coordinating ocean observation and improving modelling.

At the 2025 UN Ocean Conference, the Commission announced an Ocean Observation Initiative, emphasising the importance of the Global Ocean Observing System and the Commission's commitment. The European Commission and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO) have adopted a joint roadmap to strengthen cooperation on the UN Decade of Ocean Sciences for Sustainable Development 2021-2030, thereby aligning the EU's and UNESCO's efforts³⁶.

In 2023, the European Commission, in partnership with the African Union Commission, set up an Africa-Europe Ocean Strategic Group, run by the Africa-Europe Foundation with EU funding, to promote scientific cooperation on ocean-related matters between the two continents.

Under 'Mission Innovation 2.0'³⁷, the European Commission promoted the acceleration of the clean energy transition in line with the European Green Deal. By co-leading its 'Clean Hydrogen' Mission³⁸, the Commission is spurring on international R&I cooperation to

³³ Including the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the International Resource Panel (IRP), and other initiatives such as the Global Soil Partnership.

³⁴ JOIN(2022) 28 final.

³⁵ European Commission: Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, *Seascape assessment – Feasibility study for the establishment of an Intergovernmental Panel for Ocean Sustainability (IPOS)*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2771/903406>

³⁶ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/document/download/2e5f29fb-cb0c-4d0d-8840-97ce0ee9730c_en?filename=ec_rtd_roadmap-cooperation-un-decade-ocean-science.pdf

³⁷ Mission Innovation is a key international forum that brings together countries responsible for 90% of public innovation funding for energy.

³⁸ <https://mission-innovation.net/missions/hydrogen/>

support the growth of a global clean hydrogen value chain. Since 2024, the Mission has identified 101 EU and global hydrogen valley projects³⁹ in 38 countries, with the objective of facilitating the delivery of large-scale integrated hydrogen valleys by 2030.

Under the ‘Urban Transitions’ Mission⁴⁰ and building on the European Mission ‘Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities’, the Commission is co-leading work with a cohort of ambitious cities worldwide to strengthen their net-zero visions and speed up implementation. Since 2023, this cohort has grown to encompass 117 cities in 47 countries, with support provided under a City2City programme launched in November 2025.

In line with the global gateway strategy⁴¹, the EU has helped partner countries access environmental data through initiatives aimed at strengthening the science-policy interface, including the Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA) Programme and the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership. The Commission has also set up an international knowledge management platform to share information about standards, guidance and funding opportunities under the New European Bauhaus initiative⁴².

4.2. Promoting the digital transition

In June 2025, the Commission adopted the International Digital Strategy for the EU, setting out the EU’s vision for strengthening its international digital cooperation⁴³. This strategy focuses on boosting European competitiveness, promoting a digital agenda for the security of Europe and its partners, and shaping global digital governance and standards.

Digital Partnerships have been established with Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Canada⁴⁴. They focus on collaborative efforts to advance key technologies such as AI, semiconductors, high performance computing, quantum computing, 5G/6G networks, data governance, standardisation, and online platforms.

Since May 2023, the EU-India Trade and Technology Council has laid the groundwork for cooperation in key areas, including semiconductors, digital public infrastructure, digital skills, AI, high performance computing, and IT and telecoms standardisation. The EU-US Trade and Technology Council has made significant progress since its inception in 2021, yielding tangible results in AI, quantum technologies, standardisation, semiconductors, online platforms and 6G.

The EU-Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Digital Alliance⁴⁵ is a pioneering bi-regional cooperation framework. The EU-LAC project on a Strategic Partnership for the Implementation of Digital Dialogues in R&I Cooperation (SPIDER) focuses on the adoption of an inclusive and human-centric approach to digital transformation in areas that can benefit from the high capacity interconnectivity provided by the Building the Europe Link to Latin

³⁹ <https://h2v.eu/>

⁴⁰ <https://urbantransitionsmission.org/>

⁴¹ JOIN(2021) 30 final.

⁴² <https://knowledge-management.new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/>

⁴³ JOIN(2025) 140 final.

⁴⁴ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/partnerships>

⁴⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_1598

America (BELLA) infrastructure⁴⁶. The BELLA cable initiative was supported by the European GÉANT network⁴⁷, which connects research and education communities across more than 110 countries worldwide through its partnerships, using its own secure fibre networks to connect data providers in the global research system. In October 2025, the EU-LAC High Performance Computing Network was launched. By connecting EU and LAC supercomputers through BELLA, scientists from both regions will work together to run simulations, analyse big data and test cutting-edge processing models to address pressing global challenges, from climate modelling and drug discovery to artificial intelligence.

Building on the success of the BELLA cable between Europe and Latin America, the EurAfrica Gateway Cable is expected to provide a resilient submarine cable system along Africa's Atlantic Ocean coast, further enhancing connectivity in the region.

4.3. Strengthening cooperation on global health

The EU global health strategy⁴⁸ was endorsed by the European Council in January 2024⁴⁹. It identifies R&I as key enablers for better health, stronger health systems and universal health coverage, together with digitalisation and a skilled labour force.

The Commission has significantly advanced pandemic preparedness since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, combining immediate response capacity with long-term preparedness investments. By investing EUR 1.28 billion in over 121 actions in research and development between 2022 and 2025, the Commission has accelerated the development and testing of medical countermeasures, enhancing also the EU's resilience against future pandemics.

The Commission has stepped up its coordination of global health research funders, for example by being one of the co-chairs of the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (GloPID-R)⁵⁰ and supporting the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD)⁵¹. The Commission has also supported preparations for new partnerships, including the European Rare Diseases Research Alliance (ERDERA)⁵².

The Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking is the third iteration of the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership⁵³. In 2024, it funded 74 global health research projects with a total budget of EUR 254 million. In response to the 2024 mpox outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking activated its emergency funding mechanism and launched an emergency call, as a result of which 9 projects were funded for a total of EUR 12.1 million, covering phase 2, 3

⁴⁶ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/bella-building-europe-link-latin-america_en

⁴⁷ https://network.geant.org/international_connectivity/

⁴⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_7153

⁴⁹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/01/29/eu-global-health-strategy-council-approves-conclusions/>

⁵⁰ www.glopid-r.org

⁵¹ www.gacd.org

⁵² <https://erdera.org/>

⁵³ <https://www.globalhealth-edctp3.eu/>

and 4 studies on pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis of mpox vaccines, as well as surveillance strategies and epidemiological studies.

The Commission also supports global health research through collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP), providing EUR 28 million in funding (2022-2027) to speed up the development of treatments for drug-resistant bacterial infections and update lists of priority pathogens. EUR 1 million of that funding was assigned to support the WHO and GARDP's joint SECURE initiative⁵⁴, which aims to expand global access to essential antibiotics to treat drug-resistant bacterial infections. The Commission has supported the development of tuberculosis medicines for children and a new tuberculosis vaccine under the EU4Health work programme 2023.

The Commission has established a contribution agreement with the WHO for its R&D Blueprint for Epidemics with a budget of EUR 7.42 million, to support the development of safe and effective vaccines and treatments against filoviruses (including Ebola and Marburg), and interepidemic preparedness actions for future outbreaks. This work on preparedness has enabled the rapid implementation of therapeutic and vaccines clinical trials, notably during the 2025 Ebola outbreak in Uganda.

Finally, the Commission has continued its commitment to open sharing and access through the Global Biodata Coalition, helping to ensure the sustainability of global biodata resources.

4.4. Promoting innovation

The EU is committed to positioning itself as an attractive destination for startups, investors, and corporates from non-EU countries seeking innovative solutions and venture client projects. This is one of the flagship areas of the New European Innovation Agenda and the Startups and Scaleups Strategy⁵⁵. By strengthening international partnerships and creating pathways for attracting international talent and investment, for example through the Choose Europe for Science initiative⁵⁶, the EU aims to consolidate its role as a leading hub for innovation and entrepreneurship, driving sustainable development and competitiveness on a global scale.

In 2025, the European Innovation Council (EIC) has been advised by the EIC Board to develop an international strategy to boost its global impact and help European startups and scaleups expand internationally. The advice is to focus on four core priorities: (1) fostering international activities; (2) engaging international investors and corporates; (3) establishing thought leadership; and (4) attracting international talent. The key objectives are to help EIC beneficiaries to become global while maintaining their headquarters in Europe; to attract deep tech innovators to Europe, and to cooperate with international investors interested in the EIC companies.

⁵⁴ <https://gardp.org/secure/>

⁵⁵ SWD(2025) 138 final.

⁵⁶ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/research-and-innovation/choose-europe_en

In March 2024, the Commission adopted two recommendations in support of the Council recommendation on guiding principles for knowledge valorisation⁵⁷, namely the Codes of Practice on industry-academia co-creation⁵⁸ and on citizen engagement⁵⁹. More than 150 strategies and practices developed in the EU and beyond can be found in the EU Knowledge Valorisation Platform’s repository, which is also relevant for international partners⁶⁰.

5. MODULATING COOPERATION WITH PRIORITY COUNTRIES AND REGIONS

Geopolitical developments in recent years have affected the EU’s R&I cooperation with other countries. In the EU neighbourhood, dynamics have been driven by the association of the United Kingdom and Switzerland as well as candidate countries to Horizon Europe. Participation in Horizon Europe through association has also bolstered the EU’s R&I relations with major industrial economies abroad. Finally, there has been a renewed focus on Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with major regional initiatives having been developed. In the bilateral context, specific areas of interest for the EU and the partner countries are being addressed, for example, by engaging constructively with China.

5.1. Integrating cooperation within the EU’s neighbourhood

The United Kingdom (UK) became an Associated Country to Horizon Europe on 1 January 2024, sending a strong message of continued shared interests with the EU. In 2024, the UK performed particularly well in the European Research Council (ERC) calls, being the top beneficiary of the proof of concept grants announced in July 2024, one of the top beneficiaries of the starting grants announced in September 2024, and experiencing a 56% increase in the consolidator grants announced in December 2024, compared to the previous year. The UK was also the top beneficiary of MSCA grants in 2024.

The participation of Switzerland, a longstanding R&I partner of the EU and an active participant in the past during its association to previous R&I framework programmes, dropped during the first years of Horizon Europe owing to non-association. With its association effective as of 1 January 2025, Swiss researchers and entities are again able to participate in programme calls.

The R&I systems of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) countries Norway and Iceland are deeply intertwined with those of the EU, as are the industrial value chains and academic networks. Norway in particular, makes a significant contribution to the excellence of the R&I framework programmes.

⁵⁷ Council recommendation (EU) 2022/2415.

⁵⁸ Commission recommendation (EU) 2024/774.

⁵⁹ Commission recommendation (EU) 2024/736 – the Codes of Practice adopted in 2024 follow on from the initiative of the Codes of Practice adopted in 2023 on intellectual asset management and on standardisation.

⁶⁰ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/industrial-research-and-innovation/eu-valorisation-policy/knowledge-valorisation-platform_en

The participation of partners from the Western Balkans in the EU R&I framework programmes has increased significantly and reached its highest level in Horizon Europe. R&I efforts are being stepped up particularly through the Western Balkans Innovation Agenda⁶¹, the support to technology-oriented research infrastructures and the region's further integration into the European Research Area.

In the Eastern Partnership countries⁶², a regular monitoring of the implementation of the five R&I priorities defined in the 2021 Staff Working Document⁶³ was implemented with EU support. The Horizon Policy Support Facility gave the Moldovan⁶⁴ and Ukrainian⁶⁵ authorities expert support for designing R&I policy reforms. Despite the difficult geopolitical and economic situation in the region, all five countries managed to implement governmental reforms, adopt and launch the implementation of national science strategies, and increase their participation in Horizon Europe compared with Horizon 2020.

The Commission has focused on setting up dedicated support measures for Ukraine⁶⁶ and facilitated Ukraine's participation in Horizon Europe and the Euratom Research and Training Programme calls. For instance, a dedicated fellowship scheme, MSCA4Ukraine, supports displaced researchers from Ukraine, enabling them to continue their research activities in the EU. In line with the 2024 G7 Science and Technology Ministers' *communiqué*, the EU has set up an International Coalition for Research Science and Innovation in Ukraine, together with Ukraine, the Italian G7 presidency and UNESCO, to realise the potential of R&I in Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. The same goal, applied to climate-oriented recovery in urban environments, is pursued by the new SUN4Ukraine⁶⁷ initiative of the European Mission 'Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities'.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the EU developed and adopted R&I roadmaps on health, climate change and renewable energy at ministerial level in 2022, setting out priorities for collaboration and economic development. The Mediterranean Initiative, launched in the Horizon Europe work programme 2023-2024 and continued in 2025, contributes to the implementation of these roadmaps and has increased collaborative research between the EU and the Mediterranean by around 60%⁶⁸. The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA)⁶⁹ also contributes to these efforts in the areas of agriculture and water, having been extended in April 2024 for three more years (2025-2027). As the EU's new flagship initiative to strengthen cooperation with southern partners,

⁶¹ <https://westernbalkans-infohub.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/a-western-balkans-agenda-on-innovation-research-education-KI0221615ENN-1.pdf>

⁶² Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

⁶³ SWD(2021) 186 final.

⁶⁴ <https://projects.research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/en/statistics/policy-support-facility/psf-country/support-moldova-reforms-public-rd-sector>

⁶⁵ <https://projects.research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/en/statistics/policy-support-facility/psf-country/support-ukraine-research-infrastructures-policies>

⁶⁶ ERA4Ukraine (<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/ukraine>) gives an overview of all EU and national actions, including MSCA4Ukraine, ERC job offers, and the JRC-EUI (European University Institute) fellowship scheme.

⁶⁷ <https://www.sun4ukraine.eu/>

⁶⁸ Horizon Europe work programme 2023-2024: 37 topics with a total budget of EUR 320 million.

⁶⁹ <https://prima-med.org/>

the Pact for the Mediterranean adopted in October 2025⁷⁰ is an opportunity to reframe scientific collaboration by establishing joint Mediterranean R&I hubs, promoting the mobility of researchers, supporting the creation of a Science Diplomacy Centre, and advancing blue-economy actions. This followed the adoption of the Joint communication on the European Union's strategic approach to the Black Sea region in May 2025⁷¹.

5.2. Strengthening cooperation with industrialised non-EU countries and emerging economies

Until January 2025, R&I relations with the United States evolved positively with increasing cooperation in a variety of areas, the successful renewal of the EU-US Science and Technology Agreement, the signing of a Joint Statement setting a comprehensive R&I cooperation agenda, and strong participation of US entities in Horizon Europe. The change in the science policy stance of the new US administration, deprioritising research expenditure in top EU priority areas such as climate, environment, clean energy, or infectious diseases, and disengaging from several multilateral R&I initiatives, has been putting transatlantic R&I dialogue and cooperation under strain. To protect EU interests, actions have been developed under Horizon Europe to strengthen EU support for multilateral cooperation platforms notably in the areas of ocean observation, climate and data sovereignty. On data sets, actions include i) the development of data sovereignty frameworks, ii) the implementation of robust risk management for access to critical data, and iii) the leveraging of national funding to support access to cost-intensive digital services. Since the US remains a natural EU R&I partner, the EU is striving to keep channels of communication with R&I federal interlocutors in the US open, with a view to reassessing shared priorities and relaunching vibrant cooperation.

Regarding China, there is still a lack of progress in the discussions on the joint roadmap for the future of EU-China cooperation in science, technology and innovation, specifically on innovation-related framework conditions⁷², while considerable progress has been made on the framework conditions for research cooperation⁷³. EU-China R&I cooperation has focused on two research flagship initiatives on food, agriculture and biosolutions (FAB) and on climate change and biodiversity (CCB), where collaboration is of mutual benefit⁷⁴. However, given the above and the significant concerns about the use of intellectual property generated under Horizon Europe, Chinese entities are no longer able to participate in any of the programme's innovation activities⁷⁵. The Commission has strengthened coordination efforts with Member States to align approaches through the EU R&I Knowledge Network on China (EU-KNOC)

⁷⁰ JOIN(2025) 26 final.

⁷¹ JOIN(2025) 135 final.

⁷² These include intellectual property rights, pre-normative research, conformity assessment and standardisation, access to government procurements, and fair and transparent regulatory frameworks.

⁷³ These include open science, research ethics and integrity, the mobility of researchers, and gender equality in R&I.

⁷⁴ The Horizon Europe work programme 2023-2024 included seven actions with a total budget of EUR 86 million co-funded by the EU and China.

⁷⁵ Innovation activities are actions with a high level of technological development and greater closeness to the market.

and invested over EUR 13 million in expanding knowledge of contemporary China in areas such as politics, society, economics and trade, science and technology, and climate.

Given its very strong capacity in science, technology and innovation, the association of the Republic of Korea to Horizon Europe in 2025 unlocked a plethora of possibilities for broader and more systematic EU-Korea R&I cooperation in areas such as digital technologies, nanotechnologies or satellite navigation, as well as clean energy, climate, ocean and environmental research, and health. The same is expected with regard to Japan following the successful conclusion of the negotiations on its participation in Union programmes and association to Horizon Europe, in addition to ongoing cooperation on advanced materials. The association of New Zealand to Horizon Europe, in turn, resulted in the number of signed grants almost tripling from 2022 to 2024.

On 3 July 2024, the agreement associating Canada to Pillar II of Horizon Europe was signed, giving Canadian researchers and organisations the opportunity to participate in this part of the programme on equal terms with their EU counterparts. This has already resulted in more than 100 Canadian participations in Horizon Europe projects. This figure is expected to rise considerably, since many project proposals with Canadian participation are being evaluated or are in the grant agreement preparation phase.

Cooperation with India has gained momentum since the launch of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC)⁷⁶, focused on digital, green and clean energy technologies. The second TTC ministerial meeting in New Delhi in February 2025 agreed on further technology cooperation with joint financial investment in collaborative research on marine pollution, the transformation of waste into renewable hydrogen and battery recycling technologies for electric vehicles. Greater emphasis will also be put on enabling Indian and EU startups to collaborate. The Joint Communication on a New Strategic EU-India Agenda identifies technology and innovation as a central pillar of future EU-India cooperation⁷⁷. The bilateral EU-India Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement was also renewed until 2030.

Relations with Brazil are particularly strong in the area of green transition technologies such as integrated biorefineries and solar energy technologies, as well as in biodiversity, marine research, ecosystem/nature-based approaches to sustainable cities, sustainability, and health. The Commission contributed to the agenda for Brazil's G20 Presidency, helping to ensure the adoption of the G20 Strategy to Promote Open Innovation Cooperation, the G20 Recommendations on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility in Science, Technology and Innovation, and the 10 Leading Principles of the Global Initiative on Bioeconomy.

The strengthened relationship between the EU and South Africa is reflected in the 2025 Summit outcome and the launch of the first Clean Trade and Investment Partnership as well as South Africa's outstanding participation in Horizon Europe, being the first among African countries both in terms of the volume of grants and the number of projects. South Africa plays a leading role in the implementation of the AU-EU Innovation Agenda through co-funding of several R&I cooperation initiatives such as the Long-Term Joint AU-EU Research

⁷⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_596

⁷⁷ JOIN(2025) 50 final.

and Innovation Partnership on Sustainable Energy (LEAP-SE). The EU worked very closely with the South African Presidency of the G20 in 2025, supporting the adoption of the G20 Recommendations for Science Engagement.

5.3. Deepening EU partnerships with Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia

The Commission has delivered on its commitment to boost support for R&I cooperation with Africa, by developing and adopting the AU-EU Innovation Agenda together with the African Union Commission and Member States in 2023. The AU-EU Innovation Agenda establishes a new framework for the uptake of research results focused on public health and the green and digital transition to support jobs and growth by sharing technology and expertise⁷⁸. The Africa initiatives in Horizon Europe have boosted collaboration between researchers from both regions by an annual average of 40%⁷⁹. The AU-EU R&I Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture brings together over 70 research funders from Africa and Europe. Under the Global Gateway Africa-Europe investment package, the ‘Africa-EU Space Partnership Programme’ is backed by an EUR 100 million investment, focusing on developing space-based services promoting in particular the uptake of Copernicus to improve early warning systems for hazardous weather and climate change knowledge, strengthening institutional collaboration between the EU and Africa, and supporting the capabilities of the space industry. The ‘Regional Centres of Excellence (RCoEs) for the Green Transition Programme’ is an EUR 80 million programme aimed at supporting knowledge generation and management through better data production, access and sharing. Building on the pilot phase of the African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence (ARISE) programme implemented by the African Academy of Sciences, similar support of EUR 25 million has been announced for a second phase, triggering additional pledges from AU Member States. Celebrating the 15th anniversary of the AU-EU High-Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation, a series of events was organised in October 2025, including a workshop on AI in science in Africa-Europe collaborations, the AU-EU Dialogue on Science Diplomacy, an innovation fair arranged in partnership with the Union for the Mediterranean, and the AU-EU R&I Senior Officials Meeting.

Cooperation with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) has gained renewed momentum with the first EU-CELAC ministerial meeting on R&I held in Brussels in September 2025. At this meeting, the EU and CELAC ministers endorsed a ministerial declaration and a New Agenda for EU-CELAC Cooperation in R&I, establishing three working groups in the areas of i) health, ii) climate change, environmental sustainability and energy transition, and iii) AI in science, complementing the existing Research Infrastructure Working Group. Each group will develop operational roadmaps that define priorities, activities, and deliverables for the bi-regional cooperation in the priority area in question. The EU-LAC Innovation Cooperation Initiative was launched in October 2023 to create and operationalise a network of existing startup incubators and accelerators, and to

⁷⁸ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/ec_rtd_au-eu-innovation-agenda-final-version.pdf

⁷⁹ Horizon Europe work programme 2023-2024: 30 topics with a total budget of EUR 300 million.

structure the innovation presence of EU Member States in the LAC region. A Global Gateway Investment Agenda (GGIA) action on sargassum was launched in the Caribbean region, giving EU development cooperation an R&I dimension.

The EU's competitiveness and security is closely interlinked to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), requiring the EU to strengthen its R&I cooperation with the region. Cooperation focuses on green technologies, digital transformation, healthcare innovations, and sharing experience of regional integration (research infrastructures, talent mobility, technology transfer). The ASEAN-EU Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation identified further areas of collaboration: innovation/startups, science diplomacy and gender equality in R&I.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Since the adoption in 2021 of the Global Approach to R&I, there have been major unforeseen external developments, such as the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the escalating conflict in the Middle East, fundamental changes in US policies regarding science, climate change, environment or health, and seismic shifts in the application of groundbreaking technologies such as AI. These developments profoundly affect the global R&I landscape and require the EU to become much more assertive in defending its political and economic interests and promoting its values globally. Being a beacon for academic freedom and freedom of scientific research and gender equality is central to the EU's ambition to attract the best scientific talent, supported by the Choose Europe for Science initiative.

The EU has responded to these challenges, for example by adopting the Council recommendation on enhancing research security, developing a European framework for science diplomacy, establishing the Multilateral Dialogue on Principles and Values in International R&I Cooperation, and associating key global partners to the Horizon Europe programme, while at the same time creating a level playing field and reciprocity, in particular with China. Staying committed to the European Green Deal, EU priorities have shifted towards the clean transition and strengthening the EU competitiveness, with a focus also on defence and dual use.

Putting R&I at the heart of EU competitiveness means also putting it at the heart of EU external action. The EU needs to show exemplary leadership in using R&I for the pursuit of peace and multilateralism and for reaching the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, including by fighting against climate change and biodiversity loss. In this new context, the principles of openness and security set out in the Global Approach to R&I remain valid. In some areas further developments and adjustments are needed. These include areas related to creating a level playing field and reciprocity in international R&I cooperation, taking into account thematic priorities such as competitiveness and a stronger emphasis on startups and scaleups as well as shifting geographic priorities. This is crucial for ensuring that the EU defends its interests and stays at the forefront of R&I, while being a reliable partner the rest of the world can count on.