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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee
Subject:	*Preparation of the Council (Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)) on 28-29 May 2026* 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*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 16 July 2025, the Commission published the proposals for establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (the Framework Programme)[1], and for a Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe (the Specific Programme)[2].

2. The Commission proposal envisages a financial envelope of €175 billion in current prices for the implementation of the framework programme 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 22 January 2026, the European Economic and Social Committee delivered its opinion on the proposals.

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1 Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, for the period 2028-2034 laying down its rules for participation and dissemination and repealing Regulation (EU) 2021/695 (11765/25).

2 Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION on establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2028-2034, laying down the rules for participation and dissemination under that Programme, and repealing Decision (EU) 2021/764 (ST 11749/25).

II. WORK WITHIN THE COUNCIL

6. The Competitiveness Council held dedicated policy debates on thematic areas linked to Horizon Europe at its meetings on 30 September 2025, 9 December 2025 and 27 February 2026. The policy debates provided general guidance and covered the topics of Research and Innovation for dual use, security and defence, the future partnerships, in view of a Partial General Approach.

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

8. Since the proposed Regulation and Decision 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.

9. 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 of provisional nature without prejudice to the outcome of the forthcoming review of the EIT Regulation.

10. On 6 May 2026, Coreper provided political guidance on main outstanding issues linked to widening, priority-setting and defence research.

11. On Widening, none of the options presented received the necessary support, as delegations stressed the need to find a more balanced compromise. On priority-setting, delegations broadly supported the involvement of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC). On the proposed EIC support for innovative deep-tech companies with a focus on defence applications, delegations were divided, with a majority supporting the Presidency's compromise text on a capped support by the European Innovation Council (EIC) for defence projects, while other delegations asked for the deletion of the relevant provision.

12. Based on this guidance and on further work at technical level, the Cyprus Presidency proposes the following way forward on the main outstanding issues:

13. Widening: the horizontal principle in Article 5 has been rephrased, striking a balance between the need to promote cross-border collaboration and building on the pan-European pool of talents, while ringfencing the implementation of these principles to the dedicated widening Article 19. Further, examples of measures from Article 19(5) have been removed, while a new paragraph (Article 19(5a)) highlights the need to continue with measures that have demonstrated their value, such as Teaming, ERA Chairs or the EIC pre-accelerator and to establish other measures, such as those relevant for the ERC participation. Lastly, wording to support the progression and evolving nature of widening has been introduced, as well as on the eligibility for structures in outermost regions.

14. Priority-setting: a more detailed priority-setting process has been outlined. This process ensures Member States' involvement before the comitology. It strengthens the role of ERAC to provide advice on strategic research and innovation orientations and priorities, based on a foresight report by the Joint Research Centre. Based on this advice, the Commission shall prepare a strategic vision document, on which the HE Strategic Committee, in its advisory role, provides recommendations on the overall strategic direction and priorities of Horizon Europe. The provisions related to the priority-setting in HE will need to be further modified in order to mirror the relevant provisions in the European Competitiveness Fund regulation.

15. Defence research: the Cyprus Presidency considers that the option allowing the EIC to support innovative deep-tech companies with a focus on defence applications, including the capping of a certain amount of the total budget of the respective Pillar, received sufficient support from delegations.

16. Further changes in the latest compromise text have been introduced to address further open issues, mainly on research security, on two-stage applications, on gender, and on the role of the Council in the identification of European Partnerships and Research and Technology Infrastructures.

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III. CONCLUSION

17. The Committee is invited to confirm the compromise proposal in documents ST 9044/26 and ST 9052/26 and to recommend the Council to adopt a partial general approach at its meeting on 29 May 2026.

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