Deciphering the next European research and innovation programme and understanding its links with the European Competitiveness Funds.

Eric Foucher[1] / Nicolas Fiessinger[2] / Muriel Dal-Pont Legrand[3] / Fabrice Lemoine[4]

Now that the first drafts outlining the FP10 are available, and after the European higher education and research community's obvious relief at the ambition of this substantial budget, the first questions are being raised.

Far from never appreciating the efforts devoted to research and innovation, the community is asking questions. The texts published open up some interesting avenues. At first sight, the new pillars seem to preserve excellence and fundamental research while reconciling the expectations identified by the Draghi report concerning the transfer of this research to the market, i.e. in terms of innovation. However, the devil is sometimes in the details. The non-fungibility of the budgets (their independence and durability), the governance arrangements (autonomy) for the various programmes, the TRLs concerned by the various programmes and the levers used to organise synergies between FP10 and the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) are all elements on which the texts remain vague or even silent at this stage.

Obviously, this is a Commission proposal that still needs to be debated, probably amended, before ultimately voted on. The document's vagueness in places is therefore not entirely surprising. However, it is the duty of those involved in higher education and research to take a position, to take hold of these texts, and to fully engage in the debates. Given the current tense economic climate in Europe, there is a legitimate concern that significant pressure may be placed on reducing this budget. It is therefore essential not only to mobilize in order to safeguard an ambitious level of funding, but also to ensure the preservation of its overall consistency.

In this perspective, this note takes up the broad outlines of FP 10, of the ECF and their articulation and without judging, underlines the changes perceived through these texts and analyses their implications for the agenda of the European Research Area.

NB : All budget elements are open to discussion because they are currently circulating, but have not yet been officially confirmed or even officially released by the Commission.

[1] Université Lorraine.
[2] Université Côte d'Azur, V.I.E EU Affairs & Permanent Representative.
[3] Université Côte d'Azur, Vice President European Affairs.
[4] Université Lorraine, Vice President European Strategy.

Outlines

This note analyses the first drafts about the next Horizon Europe framework programme and the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), as well as some additional elements concerning the future Erasmus+ programme, all of these programs being expected to be in place from 2028 to 2034. The note offers an overview of the general organisation of the FP 10 and also identifies some potential issues and raises several questions. Indeed, if the interaction between the R&I program and the Competitiveness Fund is now confirmed, several questions remain unanswered so far.

- The proposed **budget** of €175.3 billion for the future framework programme, while still inferior to Draghi's recommendations, represents a definite relief and demonstrates that R&I remains a priority in Europe. Concerning now the ECF's budget, its ambitions fall significantly short of the demands outlined in the Draghi report. In addition, the reluctance of certain Member States to increase their contribution to the European budget calls into question the ability to attract private investment, a question rather ignored in these first drafts.

- **Collaborative research** is often mentioned through the prism of "applied research" (i.e. mainly in the renovated version of pillar 2), programs which seem to target the funding of high-TRL research only. More than that, the governance of this pillar and its articulation with the competitiveness fund's priorities must be clarified, as well as the (new) mechanisms which could (should) be implemented in order to ensure a maximum impact as Draghi called for in a now-famous report.

- Apart from transversality, the role of the **social sciences and humanities** in this future framework programme needs to be clarified. Nevertheless, the increase in budget (7.6 bn, X3 in constant Euros compared to the current program) is welcome. This increase should be further confirmed but there is no doubt that addressing challenges such as democracy and disinformation is essential for the future of Europe.

- It is regrettable that neither FP10 nor the ECF mentions **European Alliances**. This suggests that they are still essentially tied to the ERASMUS+ programme, a decision which ignores that universities have this unique aptitude to deliver research-based training programmes and diplomas so that strengthening research-based alliances represent a real opportunity for the ERA.

- The **ERASMUS+** program emphasises the importance of Union of Skills as well as objectives of competitiveness and defines similar objectives as those of the ECF. Nevertheless, the articulation of the Erasmus programme with these Funds and then potentially with the next Horizon programme shall be further clarified.

- Despite having a double budget (16 bn to 31 bn), the **ERC** also faces significant changes in its ruling, with additionally potential modifications to its president's contractual terms. These changes need to be clarified in order to make clear their potential impact on the program implementation.

There is no doubt that other points also require further clarification (the place of Public-Private Partnerships, the links to be created with the Union of Skills, *etc.*). This note cannot be exhaustive. Its objective is to provide a synthetic view of the first FP 10 drafts and to identify some of the major implications this new structure and its programs may have for the future European research agenda.

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Motivations

The European Commission has presented the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), which, over the next two years, will give rise to intense negotiations between the Member States, the Parliament and the Commission (some Member States are indeed still reluctant to add to the Community budget). This **note** focuses on the new structure of Horizon Europe programme (FP10), on its link with the Competitiveness Fund and on the budget associated to the different strands composing the new FP pilars. At this stage, the next Erasmus + programme and more specifically its relationships with the ECF remain to be defined, in particular the role of partnerships of excellence in the *Union* of skills pact, logically, without ignoring these programmes, this note pays less attention to them.

The aim of this note is to provide a synthetic view of the first FP 10 drafts[5] and to identify some of the major implications this new structure and its programs may have for the future European Research Area agenda.

1. General objectives of the Horizon Europe 2028 - 2034 program

One can easily identify in the 2028-2034 framework programme, a clear objective to foster investment in the EU's strategic priorities: namely, decarbonisation, digitisation, security, resilience and social cohesion. Such an ambition can only be achieved by maintaining efforts to invest up to 3% of the Union's GDP in research and development. More than any other programme before it, the success of this one depends on national willingness and capacity to maintain such a high level of investment in R&I.

This framework programme should be seen in the context of both the European Competitiveness Compass[6] and the Draghi Report[7]. R&I is seen as an essential element in supporting the EU's priority objectives, which include the Clean Industrial Deal, the AI Continent Action Plan, the Industrial Action Plan for the European automotive sector, the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy and other initiatives in line with the "Choose Europe" initiative. The aim is to align industrial investments as well as research and innovation policies. In the context of the European Competitiveness Compass, other areas can be addressed like health, digital technologies, clean industrial transformation, inclusive and democratic societies, natural resources, energy, mobility, environment, food, decarbonisation, space, and security.

The R&I investments strategy of the future Horizon Europe programme will be closely linked to the ECF, and their interactions should be visible and detailed in the MFF (Multiannual Financial Framework). It should be remembered, however, that Draghi initially advocated a budget of 800 bn. Euros to foster Europe catch up process. Can the Draghi’s objectives be achieved with such a reduced budget?

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[5] 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.

Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on establishing the European Competitiveness Fund ('ECF)', including the specific programme for defence research and innovation activities, and repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/522, (EU) 2021/694, (EU) 2021/696, (EU) 2021/697, (EU) 2021/783, (EU) 2023/588, (EU) 2023/1525, (EU) 2023/2418, (EU) [EDIP].

[6] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/competitiveness-compass_en.

[7] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/draghi-report_en#paragraph_47059.

1.1. A governance solution?

The governance of the programme, and more specifically the 'competitiveness' strand of part 2, will be carried out *via* the Competitive Coordination Tool (CCT), with the clear objective to align industrial research policies with national and European Community investments.

1.2. Specific topics-oriented (Research and) Innovation policy?

A "moonshot project" approach, similar to the missions, seems to be emerging, bringing together public and private funding on key topics. Here are a few examples of European strategic investment decisions

- To invest in CERN's future circular collider, alongside the other participating countries, with the is of maintaining Europe's leadership in particle physics research.
- To develop clean aviation to guarantee European leadership in the next generation of CO2-free aircraft.
- To build the quantum computer of the future: making Europe the first continent to fully integrate quantum computing into everyday life.
- To develop and apply next-generation AI "to the world".
- To ensure Europe's sovereignty over critical data and strategic research areas.
- To develop the next generation of launchers and become a leader in the space economy.

2. Structure & budget: 4 pillars for €175.3 billion euros.

The Commission is proposing a budget of 175.3 billion euros for the period 2028-2034. Although some R&I players were calling for €200 billions, this amount is considered to be consistent and commensurate with the programme's ambitions.

Pillar 1 - 44.1 bn	Pillar 2 - 75.9 bn	Pillar 3 - 38.3 bn	Pillar 4 - 16.2 bn
ERC - 31 bn **MSCA - 10.5 bn** **JRC - 2.6 bn**	**Strand 1, Competitiveness - 68.3 bn** o Clean Transition and Industrial Decarbonisation o Health and bioeconomy, and biotechnology o Digital leadership policy- o Resilience, Defence Industry and Space **Strand 2, Society - 7.6 bn** o Global societal challenges o NEB o EU Missions (up to 2030)	**EIC - 34.4 bn** **Innovation ecosystem - 4.4 bn**	**Widening - 5.4 bn** **R&I infrastructures** **Reforming the EU R&I systems**

2.1. Pillar 1

The ERC budget is doubled in current euros (from 16 to 32 billion euros) to strengthen support for research conducted at the knowledge frontiers. Such a program is all about recognising and financing the outstanding achievements of researchers and their teams. This evolution is thus welcome, despite interrogations on the President's contract modification.

The MSCA programme continues with a slightly bigger budget, and in addition, a certain and rather vague directionality is proposed (particularly in line with the strategic sectors already supported via the ECF). Such directionality will need to be further clarified.

Science for European policies will continue with the JRC. In addition to analysing and advising on economic policies, the JRC will provide scientific and technical support for Europe's priorities, particularly those defined by the Competitiveness Fund.

2.2. Pillar2

The pilar 2 is divided into two strands:

Strand 1 . R&I activities in support of Competitiveness Fund policies, such as

a) support for industrial transition and decarbonisation,

b) support for health and the bioeconomy and biotechnology policies,

c) support for the ECF's digital leadership policy,

d) support for the resilience, defence industry and space policies of the ECF.

This first strand is devoted to collaborative research with high societal impact and is expected to ultimately strengthen European competitiveness. The budget of 68.3 bn euros highlights the emphasis on competitiveness put by the EC. A new governance, in conjunction with the Member States and the various Directorates-General (DGs) of the European Commission, is implemented *via* the CCT.

This collaborative research forms part of the rationale for industrial support and investment. The balance between low-TRL and higher TRL that can provide access to the market remains to be clarified, although it should be noted that the distinction between Research Innovation Actions (RIAs) and Innovation Actions (IAs) has ended, with now reference being made only to "applied research". **At the moment, all the consequences induced by this "semantic" change still need to be clarified.**

Strand 2 . This strand is focused on "*society*", it includes R&I activities which meet global societal challenges. This part comprises 3 sub-sections:

> a) strengthening **democratic values**, disinformation & fighting against discrimination,
>
> b) promoting **social inclusion** to tackle inequalities (opportunities for all, migration management, mental health, health),
>
> c) advancing **future skills** to strengthen Europe's future competitiveness and inclusiveness value; facilities for NEB and EU missions. In these respects, it is clear that the contribution from **social sciences and Humanities** seems to be considered as important to address societal challenges; nevertheless, without any information about the European financial commitments associated with this program, it is difficult to provide a definitive opinion.

It should be noted, however, that the budget of 7.6 billion euros raises questions about the place of support for the Social Sciences and Humanities and its real expectations. It is written that the program shall ensure a multidisciplinary approach, where appropriate, and provide for the integration of social sciences and humanities (SSH) across all components under the Programme, including specific calls for proposals on SSH-related topics. How will this be implemented?

2.3. Pillar 3

As expected, the European Innovation Council (EIC) will be strengthened, with a proposed budget of 34.4 billion euros (a threefold increase in euros on the current budget of 10 billion euros, demonstrating the priority given to the financing of the disruptive technologies of tomorrow).

A European pilot of type-ARPA for high-risk projects (Advanced Innovation challenge, AIC) should provide outlets for ERC projects and collaborative research projects, or more generally, should promote the development of projects in areas **where strategic interests have been identified**. **In addition to the traditional tools, the EIC has set up a scale-up financing mechanism to fund growth phases as well as *business accelerator services***. This ARPA-style approach is focused on defence and dual-use research and technologies. In this context, the EIC fits in perfectly with the priorities of ECF, which is proposing 125 billion euros for defence and space. This confirms the importance the Commission attaches to the strategic role of the EIC in the current geopolitical context. The EIC objective will then be to support innovation in critical technologies, with a clear focus on defence investments.

The specific programme "Innovation ecosystem" provides support for the development of European innovation ecosystems in key technological sectors with a budget of 4.4 bn euros. The objective is to finance the development of innovation skills at the very beginning of the ecosystem construction process, thereby strengthening the knowledge triangle.

The investment programmes will also include support to innovative SMEs and scale-up strategies. Should we interpret this as referring to the current status of the EIT — even though the term is not explicitly mentioned — or is this rather about the continuation of certain KICs that have not yet achieved self-sustainability

2.4. Pillar 4

Part 4 supports the ERA policy, research and innovation infrastructures & technology infrastructures, as well as the participation in the Widening with a total budget of 16.2 bn. The Widening, with an allocation of 5.4 bn euros, is then preserved in the interests of cohesion with an integrated R&I system.

Integrating research and innovation infrastructures & technological infrastructures demonstrates the transversal aspect covered by these infrastructures: they must apply to all types of research and technologies. So far, no further details of the budget have been specified. And the articulation between technological infrastructures and the competitiveness Fund need to be further clarify as well

2.5. Other elements

- The programme will incorporate a **multidisciplinary approach** and, when consistent, will include Social Sciences and Humanities in addition to a few specific SSH-based calls.
- Concerning **cumulative funding**, Horizon Europe proposes to establish synergies with other EU programmes. This has the direct consequence that the same action could now be financed by different programmes. The rules of the EU programme apply to the corresponding contribution, or a single set of rules can be applied to all contributions, and a single legal commitment can be made.

- The will to create more synergies between fundings and among EU programs confirms that the EC has moved forward in the same logic as with its Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP[8]).

The Seal of Excellence is back in the spotlight, with Member States now able to fund projects that have received this award/signal.

International cooperation is still an important part of this programme, but it must now reinforce the EU's competitiveness and excellence. It also includes the EU's ability to attract the best talent. Finally, the aim is also to strengthen the Union's strategic autonomy, which is partly equated with improving its overall competitiveness.

European partnerships will be set up on the condition that EU actions alone cannot achieve the desired objectives. They will be set up to address challenges that require a critical mass of resources and a coordinated approach by the players involved. These partnerships must have a very clear approach and life cycle. They must have pan-European relevance and represent a geographical balance of Member States.

3. The European Competitiveness Fund

The ECF brings together 14 centralised European Union programmes: Horizon Europe (HE) as a self-standing programme but tightly connected to the ECF (via the first strand of its second part), Innovation Fund (IF) within the governance of the ECF, Digital Europe Programme (DEP), Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) - Digital, European Defence Fund (EDF), the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP), the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA), the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP), EU4Health, the European Space Programme, IRIS2, InvestEU, Single Market Programme (SME Strand) and LIFE (see Annex 7 of the Impact Assessment report for more details of each of these programmes).

There is a strong emphasis on defence and space-related aspects, in addition to the aggregation of funds already defined by STEP. The ECF is thus structured around **four** main strategic **windows** (combining support for innovation chains, infrastructures and support for SMEs):

4. Structure & budget: 4 pillars for €234,300,000.

Green transition and industrial decarbonisation	**Health, biotechnology and the bioeconomy**	**Digital leadership**	**Resilience, defence industry & space**
26 210 000 000 €	**20 393 000 000 €**	**51 493 000 000 €**	**125 204 000 000 €**
11 000 000 000 €[9]			

[8] The Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) enhances **EU industrial competitiveness** by focusing on **developing critical technologies** for a sustainable, competitive future. It tests new strategic measures and strengthens EU industrial policy. STEP uses resources across **11 EU funding programmes** to invest in strategic technologies and in people who can implement those technologies into the economy. About the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP)

[9] EUR 11 000 000 000 for activities contributing to the general objectives referred to in Article 3, as implemented in particular through cross-cutting activities such as non-thematic support of the ECF InvestEU Instrument, referred to in Chapter II, Section 2; Project Advisory, SME Collaboration, skills development, and Access to Funding, referred to in Chapter III.

While focusing on four strategic priorities, nevertheless respects the spirit of the report, it should be remembered that these amounts fall short of the demands made in the Draghi report for Europe to be competitive and catch up with the world tomorrow.

4.1. Clean Transition and Industrial Decarbonisation

This sector includes support for clean transition, green industry, energy and transport policies, implemented through the following activities: *Life activities*, development of energy efficiency solutions, renewable energy storage, clean energy supply and infrastructure, clean transport and mobility, etc.

4.2. Health, Biotech and Bioeconomy

This sector includes bio-based materials, agriculture, forestry, bioeconomy and biotechnology through the following activities in particular: Improving and protecting health, including cross-border health, by prioritising health promotion and disease prevention throughout the lifecycle through a health-in-all-policies approach, with a focus on communicable and non-communicable diseases, including mental health, degenerative diseases, autism, cardiovascular diseases, cancer and other non-communicable diseases, in particular those linked to pollution, and by strengthening international health initiatives and cooperation.

4.3. Digital Leadership

This sector includes digital leadership and, globally and coherently, for the entire digital sector, including artificial intelligence (including AI factories and gigafactories), high-performance computing, quantum technologies, semiconductors, advanced technologies and the *cloud*, 6G and other wireless technologies, undersea cables, cybersecurity and network resilience, software engineering, augmented reality and virtual worlds, digital twins, wallet and trust technologies and services, robotics, new and emerging digital technologies and priorities, as well as cross-cutting digital priorities and cross-sector projects, including those with dual-use potential.

4.4. Resilience, Defence Industry and Space

The policy to support resilience will strengthen the strategic autonomy and resilience of EU industry by consolidating the various stages of the raw materials value chain, in particular by diversifying the supply of critical raw materials from third countries, and by supporting advanced manufacturing.

It should be noted that this strategic priority accounts for more than half of the total budget allocated to the ECF. This offers an empirical confirmation of the *shift in* the Commission's priorities towards European competitiveness in a fragmented world subject to geopolitical threats and tensions.

5. Concluding remarks

This new Framework Program aims to target explicitly the technological and economic impacts of R&I, and to offer significant support to **infrastructures** and **SMEs**. In this sense, the aim is to organise a convergence of resources from *applied research* through to industrial deployment (from *manufacturing* through to the industrialisation of strategic technologies, products and services in Europe), which requires active and innovative ecosystems.

This window-based approach demonstrates a **strategic** orientation for the programme, emphasising the European issues of industrial sovereignty and strategic autonomy. To this end, the ECF is conceived as a set of dedicated programs designed to deploy activities in line with **existing or forthcoming** EU legislative priorities: *Critical Raw Materials Act, Net Zero Industry Act, Chips Act, Affordable Energy Action Plan, Circular Economy Act, Water Resilience Strategy, AI Act, Biotech Act, White Paper on Defence, Start up and Scale Up strategy, EU Internal Security Strategy (ProtectEU), Bioeconomy Strategy, Vision for Agriculture and Food and Ocean Pact, Quantum Strategy & cybersecurity Act*.

As far as **international cooperation** is concerned, cooperation will be subject (and therefore possible) to the interests of the Union.

5.1. Convergence of funding

The aim of the ECF is therefore

- to **pool resources**: resources from Member States, resources from centralised EU programmes, investment mechanisms,
- to **strengthen economies of scale,**
- but also, to encourage **de-risking** in key sectors for European competitiveness, but will the amounts finally dedicated to these priorities be increased?

This is the purpose of the ECF's "**toolbox**". It will be made up of subsidies, *procurements* and tools for coordinating industrial policies and investment instruments from the private and public sectors. Tools such as *equity*, *loans* and guarantees will be put in place to mobilise these investments.

The **PIIEC** (major projects of common European interest) will also be supported by actions under the ECF.

A significant part will be devoted to supporting SMEs. The financing arrangements are set out in Part II. It should be noted, however, that partnerships between the European Commission and the EIB Group are planned, as well as the establishment of European business networks.

5.2. Skills

The EU's competitiveness crucially depends on its **human capital**. Skills in strategic sectors must be **strengthened**, in particular through continuing training and education, and *through* the attractiveness of high-quality jobs. The workforce should support the ECF by supporting the Skills Union.

It should also contribute to the Skills Union by supporting the development of a skilled workforce with specific skills in the Fund's strategic investment areas.

The ERASMUS+ 2028 - 2034 programme should provide information soon about the interaction which can be implemented between certain partnerships of this programme and the Competitiveness Fund. It is a great pity that the links between skills and the R&I framework programme have not yet been indicated (except for the innovation ecosystems), given that research, innovation, and training are inseparable when it comes to global competitiveness. The Union must also prioritise the development of education to develop advanced skills, including digital, technical, and transversal skills.

It is also specified that all CF strategic investments should consider the possibility of including an investment in skills to alleviate skills shortages in the given CF strategic area and indicate when this is included. In practice, these measures are welcomed, but their implementation remains to be defined.

It thus must be recognised that the Union of Skills is integrated within the ECF.

5.3. ERASMUS +

The Erasmus+ + program 2028 – 2034 emphasises its close coordination with the EU strategic autonomy and competitiveness objectives. The indicative financial envelope for the implementation of the Programme is of EUR 40 827 000 000 in current prices (without AGORA Europe).

On its goals, the program should relay on the development of competencies and be in close coherence with the Green Deal Industrial Plan's pillar on green and digital skills, the 2025 Clean Industrial Deal, the ensuing Affordable Energy Action Plan calling to reinforce skills in strategic sectors such as energy and the AI continent Action Plan and Apply AI strategy, as well as the EU Defence strategy & security plan which are the main objectives of the competitiveness fund. Moreover, the distribution between the key components of the Erasmus+ program remains largely unspecified.

Nevertheless, at that stage it's quite difficult to have a clear understanding of the interaction between this programme/ or part of this programme and the Competitiveness Fund/ next Horizon Europe.

5.4. **Towards more strategic R&I policies?**

Various measures have been taken to promote European preferences, including the idea of transfer restriction measures (clauses in contracts or agreements that limit or prohibit the transfer of ownership, rights, or interests in an asset or agreement from one party to another). A beneficiary of ECF funding should **not** be allowed, during the five calendar years following the end of a project, to directly or indirectly transfer any operations, results or related rights of access and use (including the granting of licences) from a Member State or associated country to an ineligible third country.

Otherwise, EU funding may be reduced or recovered in full or in part. Further details on the application of these transfer restrictions may be specified in the work programme or the documents relating to the award procedure.

A **seal of competitiveness** could be given to very high-quality actions, and Member States could establish the conditions under which these projects could benefit from national financial support. In this vein, it should be noted that the strategic projects of the CRMA[10] and the NZIA[11] will directly receive a seal of competitiveness.

Last but not least, It will not have gone unnoticed that the European Commission no longer refrains from **funding dual-use research or technologies**, officially considering that 'the EU needs to "build more bridges" between the civilian and military domains' (Business Science, Greenacre, 26 Jun 2025), with Commissioner Zarahieva confirming on 17 July before an informal meeting of research ministers in Copenhagen that 'Like all parts of the future budget, Horizon will be open to dual use by default'.

5.5. A rethink of governance

In terms of **governance**, the ECF proposes to set up:

1) A **committee of strategic players** who will be appointed by the European Commission following an open call for expressions of interest. These members will also be informed by an **observatory of emerging technologies** of possible current trends in strategic sectors. They will also be able to advise the *Competitiveness Coordination Tool* on directionality.

[10] CRMA : Critical Raw Materials Act.
[11] NZIA : Net Zero Industry Act.

2) A fully independent **Investment Committee** will be established under the InvestEU instrument. This Investment Committee will examine financing proposals and investment operations submitted by implementing partners to be covered by the EU guarantee. It will verify the conformity of financing proposals under the InvestEU ECF.

3) An ECF InvestEU **Advisory Board** will be composed of one representative from each implementing partner and one representative from each Member State. The InvestEU ECF Advisory Board will be responsible for advising on the design of financial products, advising on the methodological risk framework, and advising on the strategic and operational direction within its area of competence. It will also advise on coordination with the EIC to ensure complementarity with other EU funding or private investment, in particular with the InvestEU ECF.

Finally, has reported that in an article by Goda Naujokaitytė published in Science Business[12] "The European Commission directorates responsible for research and for industrial policy will jointly manage the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), the Commission has confirmed. (…) At the political level, ECF will be overseen by Ekaterina Zaharieva, the commissioner responsible for research, and Stéphane Séjourné, the commissioner responsible for industrial strategy. In turn, the directorates for research (DG RTD) and industrial policy (DG Grow) will manage the €410 billion ECF together."

Without going into detail, the commitment to co-management and joint political steering suggests to the ERA community that the European Commission wishes to ensure that the research-innovation-industry continuum is maintained through this reorganisation. Let's wait and see what happens next.

[12] Science|Business Funding Newswire No. 64 | 22 July 2025 . European Competitiveness Fund to be jointly run by Commission research and industry directorates | Science|Business.