

EIROforum statement on the EU Pact for Research and Innovation

EIROforum, 11 October 2021

The EIROforum¹ members welcome the EC proposal for a [Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe](#), and the latest efforts made by the European Commission and the EU Member States towards revitalising the [European Research Area](#). EIROforum supports the values and principles for Research and Innovation, as well as the priority areas for actions identified in the Pact, which are well aligned with the work undertaken by the EIROforum organisations. There are a few key elements that we believe could be strengthened in the implementation of the Pact for Research and Innovation.

While fundamental research is indeed the first step in the innovation circle, it needs to be recognised for its essential function of improving our understanding of the world. The recent pandemic has highlighted how fundamental knowledge helps scientists and innovators come up with solutions that can improve citizens' lives and support society and economy. We would urge the Member States to give bottom-up frontier research the long-term attention, funding, and overall support it needs to maintain a European knowledge base that can rival with other global actors. With this in mind, 'Knowledge creation' could be added as a separate section and a precondition for the 'Value creation' principle spelt out in the Pact.

As the Pact stresses, Member States should reaffirm the target of investing 3% of EU GDP in research and development, and we strongly support this target. However, we advocate for a balanced distribution of investments between bottom-up and top-down research. The past decades have seen investments in challenge-driven research overtake investments in fundamental research, which could lead to imbalance in the area of knowledge creation and have adverse long-term consequences for the European science ecosystem.

Furthermore, in our view, the Pact does not sufficiently recognise the vital role played by Europe's Research Infrastructures: RIs harness scientific expertise that drives discoveries and creation of knowledge and offer access to researchers from Europe and beyond to state-of-the-art facilities. They enable integration of research communities from all over Europe, including the less developed regions, and are the ideal place to perform multidisciplinary research, which was critical to fight the current pandemic.

RIs are also drivers of innovation as they develop advanced instruments and various cutting-edge technologies, in order to stay at the forefront of their research domains. These developments are often done in close collaboration with European industry, and lead to both incremental and breakthrough innovation. Research Infrastructures provide numerous benefits to European society and economy, either directly, through addressing societal challenges or industrial needs, or indirectly through training and education, as well as knowledge and technology transfer.

Member States, at EU and national level, should support European Research Infrastructures and rely on them in order to fuel a virtuous cycle that will bring scientific breakthrough and economic progress, and help our society respond to the global challenges of our time.

The EIROforum organisations look forward to working with the Member States and the European Commission towards advancing and strengthening the European Research Area.

¹ EIROforum is an organisation of eight European Research Infrastructures, namely CERN, EMBL, ESA, ESO, ESRF, EUROfusion, European XFEL, and ILL (www.eiroforum.org).