



Joint Statement¹ on the European Parliament Draft Report on the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF)

Tech It Further brings together leading Swedish actors from industry, research organisations, universities, and regional authorities: Teknikföretagen (Technology Industries of Sweden), RISE (Research Institutes of Sweden), the University Alliance Stockholm Trio (KTH, SU, KI), FAM AB, and the Stockholm Region EU Office. Together, we represent a full innovation ecosystem from fundamental research to market deployment.

Building on our joint Key Messages and our input on the European Parliament's draft report on FP10, we share a common ambition to strengthen Europe's technological leadership by ensuring a strong and coherent framework across both Horizon Europe (FP10) and the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF).

A coherent framework across FP10 and the ECF

We welcome the European Parliament's efforts to strengthen the link between the ECF and Horizon Europe, in particular through support for the innovation journey. At the same time, it is essential to ensure a clear division of roles between the two instruments since they serve different purposes – the contributing to new knowledge and the industrialization and deployment of new technologies and solutions. To ensure clarity, the RD&I budget in FP10 pillar 2 should be ring-fenced, and the link between the two programmes should be clearly defined in both the ECF and FP10 regulations. This should include two separate, dedicated budgets: one for FP10 Pillar 2 and one for the ECF policy windows.

Avoiding overlap and duplication between instruments under FP10 and the ECF will be crucial to ensure clarity, accessibility and effectiveness for participants. This is particularly important considering new instruments being discussed under both FP10 and the ECF. Instruments such as pathway actions may have potential, but their scope, governance and financing need to be clearly defined.

Strengthening the full innovation pipeline

We support the objective of reinforcing Europe's capacity to translate research results into innovation and industrial deployment. A balanced approach across the innovation cycle should be maintained, ensuring continued support for excellent frontier research, pre-competitive collaborative research, and innovation and scaling activities.

In particular, pre-competitive collaboration between industry, academia, research organisations and other stakeholders at lower technology readiness levels (TRL) remains a key strength of the European research and innovation system and should be explicitly supported. This type of collaboration is essential for Europe's industrial competitiveness, especially in areas where companies do not conduct early-stage research themselves and where cooperation at higher TRLs is limited by competition.

¹ These Statements are input from different perspectives from the Members of the Tech it Further- platform, on how we all contribute to the industrial competitiveness in different ways and perspectives. It is therefore not a formal joint position.



Such collaboration should, where appropriate, be supported through structured and long-term cooperation frameworks, including forms building on existing European partnership models. These frameworks are important to ensure continuity, critical mass and participation from actors across the innovation ecosystem.

The ECF should function as a dedicated industrial policy instrument, with a clear focus on supporting the commercialisation of research and market deployment. This requires tools and approaches distinct from those used under Horizon Europe.

Strategic input from relevant stakeholders is essential in both Horizon Europe and the ECF. It is critical to ensure that funding is directed towards projects that genuinely strengthen Europe's technological capabilities and have a clear pathway to market, thereby contributing to long-term competitiveness – as well as long-term knowledge building through RnD.

Tech front runners belong in the ECF

Amendment 1088 about a new article on EU tech front runners in Horizon Europe (article 11a *new*), proposed by Ehler on behalf of EPP group is not supported. Tech It Further favors this instrument in the ECF since it is aimed at supporting projects that are closer to market to accelerate commercialization of research, rather than traditional RnD-projects. The proposed original text in the European Commission proposal should be kept.

Maintaining a balanced funding approach

We recognise the role of financial instruments in mobilising private investment and strengthening Europe's competitiveness. At the same time, it is essential to maintain a balanced mix between financial instruments and grant-based funding, in order to ensure continued support for collaborative and early-stage research and innovation activities.

Excellence as a guiding principle

Excellence should remain a fundamental principle guiding funding decisions across the European innovation ecosystem. Funding should be allocated based on quality, impact and European added value. Efforts to strengthen capacity across Europe should be pursued in a way that does not dilute excellence-based principles or reduce the effectiveness of the programme.

Competitiveness should be understood broadly as the ability of the European economy and its actors, including companies, research organisations and universities, to generate sustainable growth and compete successfully in global markets. This requires a strong and integrated innovation ecosystem, including excellence-based research, pre-competitive collaboration, and an effective investment journey supporting activities across the entire development chain, from research to deployment and market uptake.

For applied research and innovation at TRL level 4 and above (not basic research), excellence must encompass both academic excellence and market excellence. The higher up the TRL scale the efforts are, the greater the weight should be given to market excellence and the potential to industrialise and commercialise knowledge in Europe.

A strong and inclusive innovation ecosystem



We underline the importance of recognising the full innovation ecosystem, including universities, research organisations, industry, public sector actors and civil society organisations. These actors contribute jointly to the development, testing, deployment and scaling of innovation.

In this context, it is important to ensure strong involvement of relevant stakeholders in governance structures, simple and accessible instruments for participants, and clear and predictable framework conditions. Advisory structures should reflect the full innovation ecosystem and include balanced representation from industry, universities, research organisations, public sector actors and relevant societal stakeholders. Researchers and representatives of universities and research organisations should be clearly included.

We also highlight the importance of Social Sciences and Humanities in addressing and increasing the understanding of societal challenges, supporting innovation uptake and strengthening resilience in the face of current global crises.

Furthermore, the interaction between National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) and the ECF is of particular importance in order to enable public sector actors to become valuable and effective partners within the ECF. NRPPs can provide an important strategic bridge by translating territorial priorities into contributions aligned with ECF objectives. For example, smart specialisation strategies may play a constructive role by helping to identify assets, industrial strengths and innovation capacities, thereby lowering entry barriers for regions, cities and public actors. This coherence may also enable NRPP funding to be used more alongside ECF funding, potentially increasing regional engagement and the scale and impact of ECF projects.

Targeted support for competitiveness and talent

We note the references to broader competitiveness factors, including infrastructure and housing. In this context, access to affordable housing can play a role in attracting and retaining researchers, students and skilled workers, thereby supporting Europe's innovation capacity.

At the same time, it is important that the ECF remains focused on its core objective of strengthening research, innovation and industrial competitiveness.

The inclusion of support for Technology Infrastructures in ECF

Tech It Further welcomes the explicit inclusion of technology infrastructures within the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), as proposed by Christian Ehler. In particular, it is a positive step that technology infrastructures are integrated into SME-specific instruments and reflected in the Horizon Pathways actions (Amendment 148, Article 14d).

The concept of Horizon Pathways actions is promising and represents an important mechanism to strengthen Europe's innovation ecosystem. However, the current design places a predominant emphasis on deployment and commercialisation. To ensure continuity across the innovation cycle and to effectively bridge the gap from earlier-stage research, these actions should also explicitly support testing, demonstration, and upscaling activities. Without such provisions, there is a significant risk of a persistent gap between research outcomes and market readiness. In addition, as mentioned above, more clarifications are needed as regards the concept of Horizon Pathways.

Furthermore, Tech It Further is concerned that technology infrastructures are explicitly addressed only within the digital domain (Amendment 245, Article 28b). This narrow scope does not reflect the cross-cutting role of technology infrastructures across Europe's strategic priorities. A broader, cross-



sectoral approach is essential. This should include dedicated measures to support technology infrastructure policy and investments across all ECF policy windows, namely clean transition, health and bioeconomy, and resilience and security, alongside the digital domain.

Final remarks

Tech It Further supports the overall objective of the European Competitiveness Fund to strengthen Europe's technological leadership and competitiveness. To succeed, the ECF should complement, not replace, Horizon Europe; reinforce the full innovation value chain; maintain excellence and openness; ensure simplicity, clarity and coherence across instruments; and preserve a balanced mix of support for research, innovation, deployment and scaling.

We stand ready to continue contributing to the development of a strong and effective European innovation framework.