



PRESS RELEASE

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Communication to the Finance Committee of the National Assembly

MOBILISING EUROPEAN RESEARCH FUNDS: THE HORIZON 2020 AND HORIZON EUROPE PROGRAMMES

At the dawn of the new millennium, the European Union adopted the *Lisbon Strategy*, aimed at making the European economy "*the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world*". Since then, support for research has played an important role in the Union's strategy, although this has not yet made it possible to achieve the target of devoting 3 % of gross domestic product to research and development. The main mechanism put in place by the European Union to support this research effort is the *Horizon Europe programme*, which plans to distribute €95.5 billion in European funding over the period 2021-2027, an average of €13.6 billion per year. The European agenda for the first half of 2025 will be marked by negotiations on the future multiyear research programme, against a backdrop where the Draghi report on European competitiveness in September 2024 highlighted the risk of the EU falling behind the world's leading economies. Against this backdrop, the Court carried out a survey in 2024 on the mobilisation of European research funds, focusing on the two previous multiyear programmes, *Horizon Europe* and *Horizon 2020*.

The level of return on Horizon Europe funding obtained by France varies according to the pillars of the programme

The European Union has set up multiyear research funding programmes, the most recent of which are *Horizon 2020* (€79bn) and *Horizon Europe* (€95.5bn). *Pillar 1 of Horizon Europe* (€25 billion between 2021 and 2027) concerns fundamental research. In this area, France is improving its relative position thanks to the flagships of French research: research units attached to major national research operators (CNRS) and major research universities. However, the performance achieved was well below the target of 17.5 %. *Pillar 2 of Horizon Europe* (€53.5 billion between 2021 and 2027) and its *Horizon 2020* equivalent are organised around six major themes of applied research, bringing together researchers and businesses on an international scale. In this area, France's performance is much less impressive. This is mainly due to the lack of links between the world of public research and the world of business. *Pillar 3 of Horizon Europe* (€13.6 billion between 2021 and 2027) focuses on innovation. France's performance in this area is satisfactory, ranking second behind Germany. In the light of past results, if France were to advocate strengthening *Pillar 1* to the detriment of *Pillar 2*, it would run the risk of finding itself isolated in this position. On the contrary, it would be better to mobilise the levers likely to improve France's performance under *Pillar 2*. It would be desirable to make an assessment of France's performance in mobilising European funds public each year.

Action is needed to better manage the system, strengthen France's influence, and better support and encourage researchers to move towards Europe

Since *Horizon 2020*, national steering has been strengthened under the aegis of the DGRI, with an effective network of National Contact Points (NCPs) to disseminate information. However, administrations have not taken full advantage of the 2016 evaluation of French participation, particularly in terms of interministerial coordination via the General Secretariat for European Affairs (SGAE). A new national action plan to improve French participation in European research funding schemes (PAPFE), extending the 2018 plan which was only partially implemented, is needed to improve French participation. The integration of companies, particularly in collaborative projects under *Pillar 2*, remains inadequate. Greater commitment from Bpifrance, the competitive clusters and a clear regional approach involving regional agencies and university clusters are essential. French representation at the EU also needs to be strengthened to prepare for negotiations on the successor programme to Horizon Europe in 2025. The national support scheme run by the DGRI is effective for public researchers, but isolated researchers lack structured regional support. Companies, especially SMEs, are finding it difficult to get involved in *Pillar 2* projects, due to a lack of identified contacts. Finally, national funding, which is more accessible and predictable, has so far discouraged applications to European programmes. Better consideration of European applications in careers, an obligation to explore this funding as a priority and increased support for young researchers are needed to improve French participation and capitalise on experience.

There is a threefold urgency to the subject at hand

Negotiations on the future multiyear research plan will begin in the first half of 2025, based on the proposal that the European Commission will be putting forward by that date. There are several reasons why we need to remobilise national forces to make the most of this resource. The report submitted by former Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi in September 2024 highlights the gap between the ambitions of the Lisbon Strategy, which aims to mobilise 3 % of the European Union's GDP for research, and the results. It confirms that the EU is falling behind its main competitors, the United States and China, whose GDP is also growing faster. This report is likely to lead the Commission to propose that the multiyear research programme be integrated into a broader component aimed at improving the competitiveness of the European economy. The negotiations will take place against a backdrop where competition for European funding will intensify, with the UK having reached an agreement in 2024 allowing it to re-apply for European research funding. Finally, the continuation of the abundant national funding from which French public research has benefited in recent years, in particular as a result of the 2020 multiyear research programming law and the *France 2030 programme*, is not guaranteed given the worrying state of French public finances. This situation should force us all to redouble our efforts to find funding to maintain the national research effort.

[Read the report](#)

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