



# Position on the future Framework Programme (FP10)

MAX PLANCK SOCIETY

The Max-Planck Society (MPG) defines **excellence in science as embracing the new, the unexplored, and is about investing to gain knowledge well beyond the average**. To achieve excellence, the MPG focuses on **people, not programs** by means of significant, long term-guaranteed core funding for “high-risk” projects. With 31 Nobel Laureates and more than 15,000 publications each year in internationally renowned scientific journals, it ranks amongst the most prestigious research institutions worldwide. Although its mission is entirely focused on basic discovery, the Max Planck Society has generated over 5,000 inventions since the 1970s that have led to 2,600 filed patent families and resulted in approximately 3,000 license agreements.

Max Planck institutes operate as part of a worldwide scientific network based on international cooperation and projects. They are involved in more than 3,000 projects with over 6,000 international partners in over 120 countries. Over a third of the international guests and early career researchers are from EU countries and the MPG has been a key player in over 1,700 EU funded projects.

## Science as a central pillar of the European value project

The EU is, first and foremost, a community of shared values. The history of the EU demonstrates that science is rooted in cultural and civilizational processes. However, as the EU has undergone deeper political and economic integration, the ‘utility of science’ has become increasingly linked to material deliverables. Economic impact, in particular, has come to dominate the strategic vision of how science can serve Europe. In reality, the knowledge generated through scientific research has far-reaching impacts across numerous fields, affecting both tangible and intangible aspects of society, far beyond immediate economic gains.

Scientific research remains the most crucial process for understanding the world and expanding our horizons. In the context of FP10, the MPG firmly believes that the legitimacy of research funding must be grounded in the intrinsic value of science. Europe needs a European Science Deal, where Member States commit to prioritizing epistemic values in all disciplines, including the social sciences, humanities, and STEM subjects, as equal guardians of long-term prosperity and well-being. The MPG invites reflection on the impact of knowledge, its societal importance, and how best to promote it within the next Framework Programme. The MPG believes this is best achieved by focusing on talent, excellence, and momentum.

### SCIENCE FOR EUROPE

	<b>TALENT</b>	<b>EXCELLENCE</b>	<b>MOMENTUM</b>
<i>Strategic Goal</i>	<b>Attracting and keeping talents</b>	<b>European leadership on a global scale</b>	<b>Strengthening strategic sovereignty</b>
<i>Implementation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforcing the ERC Budget</li> <li>• Reducing the excellence gap</li> <li>• Long-term funding perspective</li> <li>• Simplification</li> <li>• International openness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalising on excellence all over the FP</li> <li>• Focus on challenges</li> <li>• Bottom-up research</li> <li>• Small consortia</li> <li>• High-risk collaborative proposals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An acceleration platform for excellent science</li> <li>• Powering Lighthouse initiatives</li> <li>• Introducing a “fighting fund”</li> <li>• Strong network of research infrastructures</li> </ul>
<i>Foundation</i>	<b>FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH</b>		



**TALENT** – Talented individuals go where they see a future. Strengthening FP10's attractiveness to top talents should be a priority.

**EXCELLENCE** – Embracing challenges means investing in fundamental research and scientific excellence that aligns with European values. An ambitious budget for blue-sky, bottom-up research across all pillars of the next Framework Programme is essential to preserve Europe's leadership in science. A strategy built on excellent research is also crucial for supporting innovation and entrepreneurship as key elements for societal impact. There is a demonstrated strong positive relationship between the quality of scientific contributions referenced in patents and the value of the respective inventions: what is considered "excellent" within the science sector also leads to outstanding outcomes in the technological or commercial realm.

**MOMENTUM** – Europe needs to build scientific momentum through timely investment in breakthrough research "made in Europe." Excellent science requires an acceleration platform to initiate timely support for frontier discoveries and transformational changes.

**To fully exploit FP10's potential as a game-changer, the implementation of current instruments should be reevaluated:**

- **European Research Council (ERC):** The ERC has proven to be a successful EU instrument for attracting leading scientists and young talents. ERC-funded research demonstrates a high spillover effect on inventions and academic entrepreneurship. For instance, more than one in ten ERC funded researchers had either created companies, transferred the results of their research to pre-existing companies, or both. However, the ERC cannot currently accommodate all excellent proposals evaluated each year. Therefore, its budget needs to be doubled, and its independence as well as its exclusive focus on scientific excellence must be maintained.
- **Postdoctoral Talent Support:** FP10 should encourage young talents to become the next generation of experts through an attractive post-doctoral scheme. The MPG proposes reinforcing the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, offering a long-term 5-year perspective to guarantee full career development. An initial 3-year research module, followed by a 2-year mobility module (which may include intersectoral training in industry and beyond), would provide optimal conditions for developing talent and addressing skills shortages in Europe.
- **Cohesive Excellence:** FP10 should promote cohesive excellence throughout the EU without replacing national R&D funding. The MPG proposes an additional person-focused scheme granting a group of four to six top scientists a research budget to conduct world-leading research in a low R&I-performing EU country.
- **Fundamental Research Freedom:** Key experts need the freedom to explore fundamental issues and provide solutions in small consortia with hop-in mechanisms and long-term, secure funding. High-risk, collaborative proposals with a bottom-up approach should receive one-third of the overall budget for collaborative actions, with the selection process based on excellence.
- **Post-Funding Evaluation:** FP10 must invest in well-structured, transparent post-funding evaluation mechanisms, leveraging achievements from previous European projects. Early identification processes for scientific breakthroughs should be implemented.
- **Acceleration Platform:** A platform for short-term lighthouse initiatives would enable swift, efficient scientific responses to key developments at the European level. These initiatives should receive research "fighting funds" and be supported by a governance board of independent scientific and technical experts.
- **European Infrastructure:** FP10 must include a clear strategy for European infrastructure investment, focusing on data storage, computing resources, and new instruments for translational access to emerging research infrastructures in Europe.
- **International Cooperation:** The attractiveness of FP10 is closely tied to international cooperation opportunities. The MPG advocates for the full association of the UK, Switzerland, and Israel in all FP10 pillars, while also promoting bilateral cooperation with Asia, South America, and Africa.
- **Civilian Research Focus:** Military or defense-related research should not divert resources from open, civilian research under FP10 and therefore should be funded through a separate budget.
- **Simplification Measures:** MPG calls for effective simplification measures in the design process of FP10, putting applicants first. Coordinated efforts among Member States should ensure smooth scientific conduct and project management, including security and IP issues.

An FP10 grounded in European values and scientific excellence will have a major impact on global science leadership. Science, and science in the service of the economy, should be seen as distinct goals. Science should primarily provide rational support for the European project, rooted in democratic, libertarian, and egalitarian values.