

Invest in research, innovation and higher education to fully realise the potential of Europe's Global Gateway

At a time of accelerating geopolitical uncertainty, the EU Global Gateway is critical in ensuring long-term partnerships based on mutual interests that enhance Europe's competitiveness. As efforts gather to take the Global Gateway to the next level in the coming years and in the post-2027 EU Budget, we urge the EU to strengthen strategic commitments in and through research, innovation and higher education with Low- and Middle- Income Countries (LMICs). Concrete actions and adequate resources are needed under the [Global Gateway's fifth investment priority on education and research](#) to fulfil its potential to benefit Europe and its partners worldwide. Research-driven international collaborations provide the foundation for sustainable, prosperous knowledge-based economies and are instrumental in tackling common challenges, including health threats, climate change, and digital transformation.

The European Commission, national authorities and the private sector must invest adequately in research, innovation and higher education – in line with Global Gateway priorities – to strengthen the competitiveness, resilience and preparedness of Europe.

The [Draghi Competitiveness report](#) warns that without R&I at the heart of the economy and responsibly connected with the rest of the world, Europe risks lagging behind and becoming marginalised. The [Niinistö report](#) also urges the EU to build long-term international partnerships on the basis of mutuality and trust. The [EU-AU Summit of 2022](#) set the ground-breaking example for collaboration with LMICs with the political direction towards the [AU-EU Innovation Agenda](#), thus acknowledging that scaled-up, equitable collaboration in research and innovation is a crucial vehicle for strengthening such partnerships. However, research does not feature as a strong component of the [recently announced 2025 flagship Global Gateway projects](#). Which illustrates a wider trend of limited opportunities thus far despite the preparation and potential already in place. We therefore urge the European Commission, national governments and the private sector to scale up investment in research, innovation and higher education infrastructure in LMICs and to incentivise equitable collaborations with research institutions in Europe. Now is the opportunity to consolidate this strategic need for initiatives with research and higher education as their centrepiece, with simplified funding mechanisms and strong policy orientations for the post-2027 EU budget.

Europe's 360-degree approach requires research, innovation and higher education to be better integrated across all Global Gateway priorities to ensure the competitiveness, effectiveness and sustainability of our international partnerships.

We are concerned that a holistic approach to digital and green transitions, sustainable value chains and health is undermined by persistent underinvestment in research, innovation and higher education. Such opportunities to ensure that these partnerships translate into concrete benefits with interregional approaches and cross-sectoral collaborations must be considered. Strengthening the knowledge ecosystems of our partners is a necessity, just as enhancing research security in Europe is imperative. Responsible internationalisation for research underpins European Green Deal objectives, fosters mutual prosperity, and is critical for confronting global challenges. Just as R&I has been placed at the heart of the European economy, it must be just as embedded in Europe's partnerships worldwide. Therefore, effective investment in research, innovation and higher education must serve as a key enabling

component of the 360-degree approach across all strategic priorities. The R&I sector has been inspired by the Global Gateway to set up innovative forms of collaboration and alignment based on reciprocity, equity and mutual benefit. We are demonstrating the Team Europe approach through the [Africa-Europe Clusters of Research Excellence \(CoRE\) initiative](#), [European Research Alliance for Sustainable Development \(ERASuD\)](#) and several European Universities Alliances¹. Many in our sector have [encouraged](#) the EU-funded African Research Initiative for Scientific Excellence (ARISE) programme, not least for its potential to evolve into a Team Europe Initiative. EU Global Gateway investments must capitalise on this potential to enable it to flourish particularly by fostering sustainable, long-term research infrastructures and scientific capacities.

International research collaboration with LMICs must also be funded through an excellence-based self-standing successor to Horizon Europe (FP10).

Alongside investments, through the Global Gateway and Team Europe approaches, in the research, innovation and higher education capacities of our international partners, we urge continued and enhanced funding for R&I collaboration with LMICs in a self-standing successor to Horizon Europe (FP10). EU budget simplification should not artificially differentiate excellent research collaboration between Europeans from our similarly excellent collaboration with partners in LMICs. Funding mechanisms should be tailored to foster equitable partnerships and genuine co-creation that ensure long-term impact.

We call for the establishment of a research-focused advisory group including research-performing organisations and universities, that can enhance the Global Gateway with valuable experience, expertise, coordination and readiness to act.

The Global Gateway framework must be enhanced through structured engagement with research, innovation and education stakeholders. The Global Gateway receives input from a [Business Advisory Group](#) established to ensure private sector involvement. This is complemented by the [Civil Society and Local Authorities Advisory Platform](#). However, research, innovation and education stakeholders can also provide valuable expertise that is directly relevant to Global Gateway's education and research investment priority, as well as, transversally relevant to all other investment priorities. Establishing a dedicated research-focused advisory group with representatives from Europe and LMICs would have a multiplier effect not only with governments but also among private actors and investors, including SMEs, gaining more confidence to collaborate and contribute towards mutual benefits in international partnerships. Our networks and relationships with relevant stakeholders across the world position us well to engage in structured dialogues and to boost the Global Gateway as it scales up.

Realising the full potential of the Global Gateway through a 'Team Europe approach' requires continued and sustained investment in research, innovation, and higher education as key enablers of sustainable development. Together with our partners in LMICs, we stand ready to contribute our expertise, experience, and partnerships to make this vision a reality.

¹ See '[Report on the outcomes and transformational potential of the European Universities initiative](#)', p. 268-269.

