

The Guild statement on EU Partnerships

Following the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) meeting on 12–13 October, which discussed the future configuration of the European Partnerships under the next Framework Programme for Research & Innovation (FP10), The Guild welcomes the Member States' support for continuing Global Health EDCTP3, EuroHPC and the Innovative Health Initiative (IHI) joint undertakings. Successful partnerships build on long-standing established expertise and leverage public investment to deliver excellent research & innovation (R&I). Their distinctive features and strengths must therefore be safeguarded.

As research-intensive universities involved in partnerships, we believe the process should consider not only necessity and thematic alignment but also the award criteria set out in Article 25(1) of the proposed FP10: excellence, impact, and the quality and efficiency of implementation. Since European Partnership projects are funded by FP10, the partnership selection itself should be held to the same standard. In addition, partnerships must meet a higher test to be funded beyond regular FP10 calls. They must reinforce European added value through strong alignment with the EU's strategic priorities.

The Global Health EDCTP3 and the IHI illustrate this principle as both are globally established brands of almost 20 years each. Our members value the trust they have built, as well as the quality of their funded projects and partnership operations. However, the proposed process risks weakening the characteristics that underpin their success. Prioritising partnerships by strategic theme without considering the quality and comparability of their collaborative models could undermine effective governance and implementation. Likewise, it could weaken partners' confidence in further investment, particularly where proposed successor partnerships integrate different partners and missions that are less compatible.

European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP)

Building on collaboration with currently 33 African and 16 European countries, Global Health EDCTP3 is a flagship of the AU-EU Innovation Agenda, a geopolitical asset for FP10, and helps articulate the research dimension of the EU Global Gateway. Health outcomes in Africa and Europe are not defined by borders, as communicable diseases and increasingly non-communicable diseases connect the two continents and populations on both sides benefit from research on fighting disease among highly diverse populations with very different genetic characteristics^{1, 2}. Equitable joint governance, steered by the EDCTP Association, has also built a level of trust between African and European countries that no other instrument has matched. For example, African countries have voting status equal to that of European Member States in line with the equity principle.

If a quality assessment were to be applied to protect the distinct nature of FP10 as an R&I programme, the evidence of the quality of excellence research, impact and implementation stemming from EDCTP's distinct partnership model would guide policymakers on the aspects in need of safeguarding in successive

¹ Maffia, P., Gaye, B., Bukachi, F., & for the Africa-Europe CoRE in NCD & Multimorbidity co-leads. (2025). Tackling cardiovascular diseases in sub-Saharan Africa: The Africa-Europe CoRE in non-communicable disease and multimorbidity. *European Heart Journal*, 46(30), 2941–2944. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurheartj/ehaf330>

² Pesce, M., Maffia, P., & Gaye, B. (2025). Rheumatic valve disease and acceleration of cardiac aging in Africa: Next-generation answers for an old, orphan problem. *European Heart Journal*, 46(34), 3319–3321. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurheartj/ehaf350>

partnerships. The Guild is concerned that integrating partnerships with clear thematic links may still prove to be detrimental because it may dilute the shared purpose of existing partners. But the EDCTP partnership also squarely meets the additional strategic requirement. It acts as a foundation for the EU's special partnership with the AU, is integral to the EU Global Gateway, and invests in the competitiveness of the EU and its partners.

The Guild recommends that EDCTP remain a standalone joint understanding to continue fostering stronger partnerships across the two continents. We are confident that this consideration would be supported by the award criteria assessment across the partnership portfolio, in line with Article 25(1).

Innovative Health Initiative (IHI)

Building on the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) and, since 2021, as IHI, the partnership has brought together industry, academia, SMEs, and patient organisations in more than 200 projects. Its funding model secures health benefits that national markets and programmes alone could not deliver, while keeping the agenda tied to patient and societal needs. Its broad scope across disease fields and challenges connects public and private actors across the value chain, responding directly to the Draghi report's priorities for life sciences and biotechnology.³

The Commission set ambitious health goals for the EU, including making Europe the world's most attractive region for life sciences by 2030, cutting premature cardiovascular deaths by 25% by 2035, and aiming to improve the lives of more than 3 million people by 2030 through better cancer prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, and quality of life support.^{4, 5, 6} Achieving this requires stronger collaboration across the R&I ecosystem, connecting disease understanding with clinical evidence, regulators and health systems across our national borders.

As highlighted in [The Guild's response to the call for evidence on joint undertakings in FP10](#), IHI's deliberate focus on high technology readiness levels can support the commercialisation and exploitation of research outcomes. The European Competitiveness Fund (ECF) must help multiply IHI's impact by supporting the scale-up and dissemination of innovation solutions developed through IHI-funded projects. To enable the ECF to do this, it will be critical to select scale-up projects based on quality, using an appropriate expert evaluation procedure, to avoid selection driven by the influence of existing industries.

Taken together, the case for IHI rests on two parameters that should be assessed together: research quality and strategic fit. Projects funded through IHI calls have an impact on the health of our citizens, and the quality of implementation is supported by shared governance and funding. At the same time, IHI contributes to the EU's health goals, to competitiveness and to the pathway from research to deployment. A strategic fit without quality would fund partnerships that don't deliver, while quality without strategic fit would fund excellent research that does not serve current health challenges.

³ Draghi, M. (2024). The Future of European Competitiveness—A Competitiveness Strategy for Europe (Part A). Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2872/9356120>

⁴ European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. (2025). Choose Europe for Life Sciences: A Strategy to Position the EU as the World's Most Attractive Place for Life Sciences by 2030. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0525>

⁵ European Commission: Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety. (2025). EU Cardiovascular Health Plan: The Safe Hearts Plan (2025). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2025:1024:FIN>

⁶ European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. (2025). EU Mission: Cancer. https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/eu-missions-horizon-europe/cancer_en



The Guild recommends retaining IHI's distinctive model, as it builds on proven excellence, impact, quality and implementation, while also providing outstanding, clear added value to European citizens and delivering substantial health benefits that could not otherwise be achieved.