

# ERICs at the Heart of Europe's Research and Innovation System and FP10

## Executive summary

European Research Infrastructure Consortia (ERICs) are long-term strategic research infrastructure assets that accelerate research and innovation, provide the knowledge base needed to address major societal challenges and strengthen Europe's global competitiveness. They enable scientific discovery and innovation at a scale that no single country can achieve alone, by pooling and integrating national efforts, investment, facilities, expertise and data resources into shared European infrastructures.

This strategic role of research infrastructures is recognized in the European Strategy for Research and Technology Infrastructures (2025)<sup>1</sup>, which aims to strengthen Europe's infrastructure ecosystem and ensure coherence between research, technology and digital infrastructure.

**The ERIC Forum emphasizes that FP10 should continue to sustain Europe's existing ERICs and use their services and leverage their assets strategically.**

FP10 should fully make use of the existing research infrastructure ecosystem and leverage their assets and knowledge, and investments into new infrastructures should be coordinated with existing structures to enable broad access to ERIC services and avoid potential overlaps between new and existing infrastructures and prevent additional fragmentation of research ecosystem. One solution for this is to integrate the ERICs across EU research and innovation programmes thereby boosting their visibility and access to their services. The strategic integration could be facilitated via prior consultation of the ERIC Forum representatives, and dialogue with the European Commission authorities responsible for the respective parts of the work programmes.

The FP10 should:

- Sustain Europe's ERICs, European Research Infrastructures, as long-term strategic assets underpinning the European Research Area.
- Better utilize the existing research infrastructure ecosystem, e.g., throughout the future FP10 Work Programmes. Enable broad access to ERIC services and integrate them across EU research and innovation programmes.
- Avoid fragmenting the ecosystem by refraining from supporting new infrastructures with similar goals or without coordination or seeking synergies with existing research infrastructures with similar mandates, stakeholders or research content. Strengthen the visibility, coordination, and integration of European Research Infrastructures.
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of European Research Infrastructures by supporting both operational needs and infrastructure development, enabling ERICs to maintain and evolve their capacities over time.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, European strategy on research and technology infrastructures, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/9553939>

## Introduction

European Research Infrastructure Consortia (ERICs), currently 32, are a cornerstone of the European Research Area (ERA), research, development, innovation and competitiveness. They integrate national investments into sustainable, pan-European infrastructures that enable scientific excellence, innovation and collaboration across borders and all scientific domains. A majority of ERICs operate as distributed research infrastructures, connecting facilities, resources, data, and research services across multiple sites in different countries, while some of the ERICs are established as single-sited facilities, together serving tens of thousands of researchers each year, facilitating access to a wealth of data, services and related research outputs to address cutting-edge research questions. ERICs, European Infrastructure Consortia<sup>2</sup>, typically established by several Member States (and associated countries, other non-EU countries and intergovernmental organisations), reach large communities of researchers and innovators and provide them with access to world-class capabilities that accelerate scientific breakthroughs and technological development, provide access to cutting-edge facilities, data resources and expertise. The ERIC infrastructures support interdisciplinary research across thematic areas ranging from health and environment to energy and food, from digital technologies and social sciences to physics and engineering or humanities and culture sciences — while providing advanced experimental capabilities and interoperable services and generating long-term datasets essential for evidence-based policymaking.

At the same time, the European research infrastructure landscape is becoming increasingly complex, with the emergence of research entities e.g., Technology Infrastructures (TI) or new institutionalised legal structures, European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDICs). To remain at the forefront of the global cutting-edge research, development and innovation, Research Infrastructures should, and are, continuously expanding their scope, services and contributions in response to evolving scientific and technological needs, including through strengthened collaboration with industry. While ERICs already play a significant role in addressing these objectives, adapting to continuously increasing demands requires adequate and sustained resources. Ensuring coherence across this evolving landscape, while fully exploiting existing capacities, therefore calls for strengthened alignment and EU-level support beyond national investments. Otherwise, there is a risk of fragmentation, duplication of efforts, waste of Member State and EU level resources and underutilisation of Europe's established Research Infrastructures.

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<sup>2</sup> European Union, Council Regulation (EC) No 723/2009 of 25 June 2009 on the Community legal framework for a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC), Official Journal of the European Union L 206, 8 August 2009, pp. 1–8. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2009/723/oj/eng>

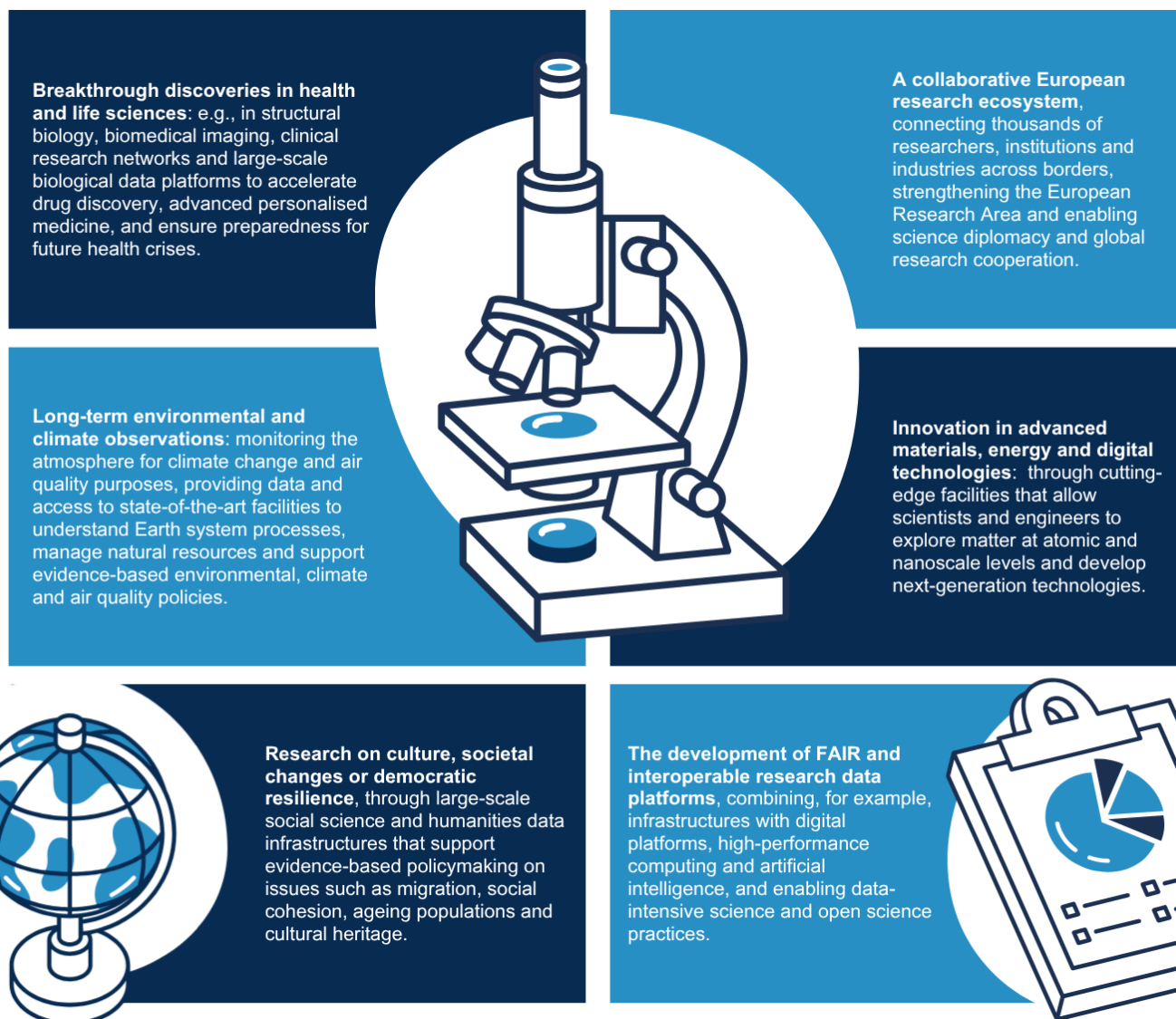


Fig. 1 At a glance: examples of what the ERICs enable and provide

The ERIC Forum highlights the following priorities for FP10:

## 1. Effective use of ERICs, European Research Infrastructures

To maximize the return on investments, FP10 should strengthen mechanisms that allow existing European Research Infrastructures to evolve, upgrade their capacities, and expand their services in response to emerging scientific and societal needs. In this context, FP10 should prioritize **effective use of existing ERIC infrastructures across the upcoming FP10 Work Programmes**, rather than diluting investment across multiple new and potentially overlapping initiatives established under different policy or funding frameworks. The need for strategic leveraging of the capacities of established infrastructures is, among others, corroborated by the European Research and Technology infrastructure strategy<sup>3</sup> and other EU strategy documents such as the Life

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/9553939>

Science Strategy<sup>4</sup>, the European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures<sup>5</sup> and the OECD Transformative Research and Technology Infrastructures<sup>6</sup>.

For example, complementarities between scientific infrastructures and digital capacities to strengthen Europe's integrated ecosystem of research, data and digital infrastructures can be obtained by a close coordination and alignment with the mandate of the emerging **European Digital Infrastructure Consortia (EDICs)**, which purpose is to address challenges under the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030.

In the context of evolving discussions on **Research and Technology Infrastructures**, it will be important to ensure coordinated development to avoid fragmentation of resources. Clear and well-designed definitions of Research and Technology Infrastructures can play a useful role, provided they safeguard fundamental research, maintain a continuum between the two, and remain flexible where boundaries are not clear-cut. FP10 should recognise that, in practice, the distinction between Research Infrastructures and Technology Infrastructures is often nuanced; FP10 should provide a framework that allows RIs to operate simultaneously as TIs, or to evolve into hybrid models. Several ERICs already provide services up to the highest technology readiness levels while remaining firmly anchored in research-driven activities, thereby supporting the full spectrum of the ERA ambition, from research to development, innovation and competitiveness. Any strict categorisation would therefore fail to capture the reality on the ground and the interconnected nature of these activities. Should dedicated budget allocations be established for RIs and TIs, these considerations should be duly reflected so as to ensure sufficient flexibility for ERICs and RIs whose activities span both domains.

In this context, this highlights the need for a coordinated development of the European RI landscape, together with the member states, the European Commission and the ERICs to leverage Europe's existing potential. Adequate resources should be provided to ERICs to sustain and further develop their operation and services for academic and industry researchers. This ensures that the ERICs continue to fulfill their main mandate to enable globally leading research and innovation, and can help support Europe's competitiveness and **resilience**.

## 2. Boost access to ERIC Services

FP10 should maintain and strengthen EU funding for **transnational access** to ERICs services, including physical, remote, and virtual access. Access to world-class research infrastructure services is essential to maintain and boost competitiveness of European science, support European cooperation across borders, including widening countries, and reinforce Europe's leadership in international research collaboration and science diplomacy. Lastly, such access should ensure that the results generated are made openly available, in line with Open Science principles and contributing to access to excellence across the European Research Area.

Moreover, FP10 should continue to provide funding schemes that **strengthen collaboration** between research infrastructures, academic and industry researchers and developers, and public sector stakeholders, leveraging the capacities and investments established through Horizon Europe. ERICs contribute significantly to **Europe's innovation ecosystem** by providing access to advanced facilities, expertise, and services to both academic and

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission, European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/9553939>

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures – Principles and guidelines for access and related services, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/8299402>

<sup>6</sup> OECD, [Transformative Research and Technology Infrastructures](#), 2026.

industrial users. FP10 should recognize innovation, alongside scientific research results, in broader terms to also include technological development, data infrastructures, standards, policy advice, or knowledge transfer.

For example, EU funded Research Infrastructure access schemes developed under the currently foreseen Pillar IV, Pillars I-III and the cluster programmes in the next Horizon Europe programme, programmes foreseen within the European Competitiveness fund, and other relevant initiatives should support the evolving role of ERICs in providing services across a broader segment of the research and innovation continuum, including activities approaching higher technology readiness levels – areas where many of the ERICs routinely contribute to. This would allow ERICs to better translate research capacity into innovation, industrial uptake, and societal impact. **As anchors of Europe’s research communities, ERICs play a central role in the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC). Collectively, they are and have the potential to become, cross-cutting enablers of European research and innovation, making their services, tools, expertise and data resources accessible and thereby accelerating scientific excellence, innovation, AI-driven discovery and collaboration across the European Research Area. The ERIC Forum supports the establishment of a dedicated and sustainable EOSC partnership in FP10 to ensure an efficient and purposeful EOSC with an appropriate governance and funding to support the community engagement required for EOSC to fulfil its vision as a federated ecosystem and web of FAIR data and services for research and innovation<sup>7</sup>.**

### 3. Sustainable Support to Address Societal Challenges

ERICs have continuously evolved to address pressing societal challenges across Europe and beyond, facilitating geographic inclusion and collaboration in the ERA and globally. They continuously develop their services, and contribute to EU policy priorities, such as climate transition, health, digital transformation, or societal resilience.

During FP9, ERICs have shown their capacity to react to numerous challenges affecting European societies as a whole: a pandemic threatening global health, connectivity and supply chains, geopolitical shifts and conflicts raising considerations on open science versus sovereignty, as well as energy supply challenges. RIs have therefore contributed to Europe’s resilience in a changing global environment.

However, Member States’ national contributions often are tied to the ERICs’ original mandates. They are not sufficient to support the evolving strategic role of the ERICs and their services. This highlights the need for a more strategic, sustained and complementary EU-level support under FP10 to ensure that ERICs can continue to fulfil their strategic role and deliver impact in discussion with their constituencies.

The new co-funding instrument foreseen under Pillar IV, whereby the European Union could contribute up to 20% of the building costs of critical new world-class capacities, can create valuable opportunities for Research Infrastructures requiring major capital investments, particularly those having large, centralized facilities. However, this does not reflect the operational model of many ERICs, of which the majority are distributed Research Infrastructures. It is therefore important that all ERICs benefit from this mechanism. For example, this could be through the support of building capabilities in National Nodes. Alternatively, complementary funding could also be made available to support operational costs linked to high-impact projects with clear European added value.

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<sup>7</sup> EOSC Association, The EOSC Association calls for a distinct Work Programme-based Partnership for EOSC in FP10 to accelerate excellent, scalable science in Europe. Zenodo, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20485703>

FP10 should, therefore, provide **stable and predictable EU-level support and dedicated funding instruments**, complementing Member State investments and enabling ERICs to operate sustainably, and offer continuous transnational access and expand their services.

## Conclusion

Europe has already built a unique, collaborative, and successful world-class ecosystem of research infrastructures through the ERIC framework to deliver breakthroughs such as in advanced materials, health and life-sciences, long-term environmental and climate observations, or underpinning digital and data-driven research through FAIR and interoperable platforms, and many more.

FP10 offers a strategic opportunity to **strengthen this infrastructure ecosystem**, ensuring that ERICs continue to support scientific excellence, innovation and policy-relevant research to address societal challenges and enhance resilience across Europe. ERICs provide the capabilities to contribute to the response to Europe's strategic priorities. FP10 should **ensure the long-term sustainability** and strategic use of ERICs, enabling ERICs to continue their mission. Secured European level support will allow ERICs to ensure that Europe remains a global leader in research, development and innovation, enabling long-term competitiveness globally.

New forms of collaboration, e.g., inviting the ERIC Forum to relevant FP10 Programme Committee and stakeholder discussions, such as with the European Commission and the European Parliament, would bring in the perspectives of the European Research Infrastructure Consortia and their research communities, and strengthen alignment between policy priorities and the operational realities of the European research infrastructure ecosystem.