

IGLO Open: Update on negotiations on FP10 and ECF: main conclusions of May COMPET

Date:	02.06.2026
Place of the event:	CSIC, Rue du Trône 62, Brussels
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Loizos Solomou, Research Working Party Chair and Research and Innovation Counsellor for Cyprus

- Work is ongoing to address comments on the ECF proposal, with particular attention being paid to ensuring clear links and alignment with FP10.
- Other ongoing issues include “priority setting” and the pre-comitology phase.
- Widening remains a sensitive issue as it is closely linked to the MFF. This creates an additional dependency on the overall budget discussion, which is why some items still remain in Negoboxes.
- European Partnerships are another major point of discussion. The European Commission proposed streamlining coherence by simplifying the rules for participation and governance and improving monitoring and data collection.
- The Competitiveness Council, which took place on May 29, was unable to reach an agreement due to these points of conflict. At the same time, the Member States wanted to take the time to address the most contentious issues thoroughly.
- The goal is to reach an agreement before summer vacation to send the right political signals to stakeholders and European Parliament and to start the trialogue.
- Under the current MFF, there is no possibility of budgetary retroactivity. Delays in implementation cannot be compensated for later, as unspent funds are lost and ultimately returned to the contributors. This makes timely implementation even more important than in previous programming periods.
- The Presidency would like to have the Partial General Approach (PGA) finalised by summer, because the ECF will certainly have its PGA in the coming days (edit 13/07: the ECF reached its PGA on 16/06 and FP10 26/06). Given the European Parliament’s schedule and the fact that both proposals have the same rapporteur in the EP, it is advisable to finalise the PGA as soon as possible.

Q&A

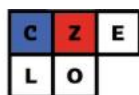
Q: How would the potential risk of losing the budget work in practice?

A: Part of the European Commission’s philosophy is to make sure that money is spent when it is supposed to be spent, without retroactivity in expenditure. After MFF budget negotiations, they might know how it will be implemented.

Q: Is it possible to specify the timeframe for the meetings and how the PGA approval process will work?

A: This will be the sixth compromise text from the current Presidency to be sent to the Member States. We would like to reach a political agreement by June 24.

Q: What are the reactions within the Research Council to large-scale “bottom-up” collaborations?



A: The text from the previous presidency contained the reasoning behind this proposal. However, many countries oppose it, and according to the written comments, only a few countries support it. The proposal arrived late, so there was not much time for comments, for clarifying several issues, or for answering questions. Many countries continue to express concerns and are trying to understand this major and dramatic change in Pillar II.

Q: What can we do about conflicting and divided positions on widening?

A: Some aspects of Widening remain in Negoboxes and cannot be discussed within the Competitiveness Council. The Presidency's goal was to emphasise that Widening should benefit all Member States, should not be a matter of rivalry, and that a compromise must be reached that will lead to improvements for all parties involved. Given the importance and sensitivity of the issue, the Member States want to put measures important to them in the text, recognise in their text to allow for implementations to adapt and change.

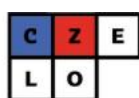
David González, Spanish Science Counsellor

- Spain started preparing for the FP10 negotiations after its 2023 Presidency and updated its national position in May last year. Spain worked on a common paper with Germany on collaborative research and prepared a separate document on comitology, reflecting concerns about the future governance of a more complex programme landscape, including Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, the ECF and other related instruments.
- Governance and priority setting remain among the key open issues. Spain sees Horizon Europe as the most important EU financial instrument for research and innovation and therefore stresses the need for clear rules, strategic coordination and appropriate involvement of Member States and associated countries.
- The role of regions and the local level is particularly important for Spain, as research and innovation competencies are shared with regions. Spain also welcomes the fact that regions are mentioned for the first time in the Commission's proposal.
- On dual use, Spain considers that the Presidency has reached a reasonable balance, but safeguards are still needed. Spain does not want defence to be funded through Horizon Europe and remains cautious about possible links with the ECF.
- Spain agrees with the Commission's aim to streamline European Partnerships and make them more efficient and transparent. However, it stresses the need for proper monitoring, common financing rules and legal certainty. One of Spain's main concerns is the possible transfer of national funds to a third legal entity, which it sees as risky and potentially complicated for beneficiaries and national ministries.
- Other issues, such as the future of ERC, collaborative research, comitology or ERA activities, are still open.

Q: What are Spain's concerns regarding comitology?

A: The proposed governance structure may be too complex and may not provide Member States with enough information in advance. This is important because different topics require different expertise, and Member States need to know what will be discussed in order to send the right representatives.

Q: How does Spain see synergies between Horizon Europe and other funds?



A: Spain wants to preserve the ability to transfer funds while making the system simpler. It supports new instruments only if they have clear criteria and do not create new silos, structures or unnecessary administrative layers. Existing instruments should be strengthened where possible.

Q: What is known about the ECF and the proposed coordination tool?

A: Many details remain unclear. Priority setting should focus on defining strategic areas from a research and innovation perspective, rather than moving directly to individual projects. Member States would contribute through high-level groups.