

FP10 Readiness Brief #2

Reading EU priorities before the calls are published

**How researchers and universities can interpret emerging EU policy signals,
strategic orientations, and programme debates before work programmes
and calls are finalised**

FP10 Readiness Series | Victoria Folea

July 2026

Independent professional brief for information and discussion purposes.

LLM-assisted tools were used to support drafting, language refinement and source organisation. The author reviewed, selected and interpreted the information and remains responsible for the final content.

Calls are not the starting point

Work programmes and calls are the visible end of a longer policy process. Before they appear, there are already signals in political guidelines, Commission priorities, strategic plans, stakeholder debates, partnership discussions, budget negotiations, expert reports and programme architecture.

This is why the proposed structure of Horizon Europe 2028-2034¹ is already useful for researchers and universities (Figure 1). It does not provide future call topics in detail, and it should not be read as a substitute for work programmes. However, it shows how the future framework programme may organise research excellence, collaborative research, innovation, institutional capacity, missions, infrastructures and large strategic initiatives. In other words, it helps researchers and university managers ask an earlier and more practical question: where could our expertise become relevant?

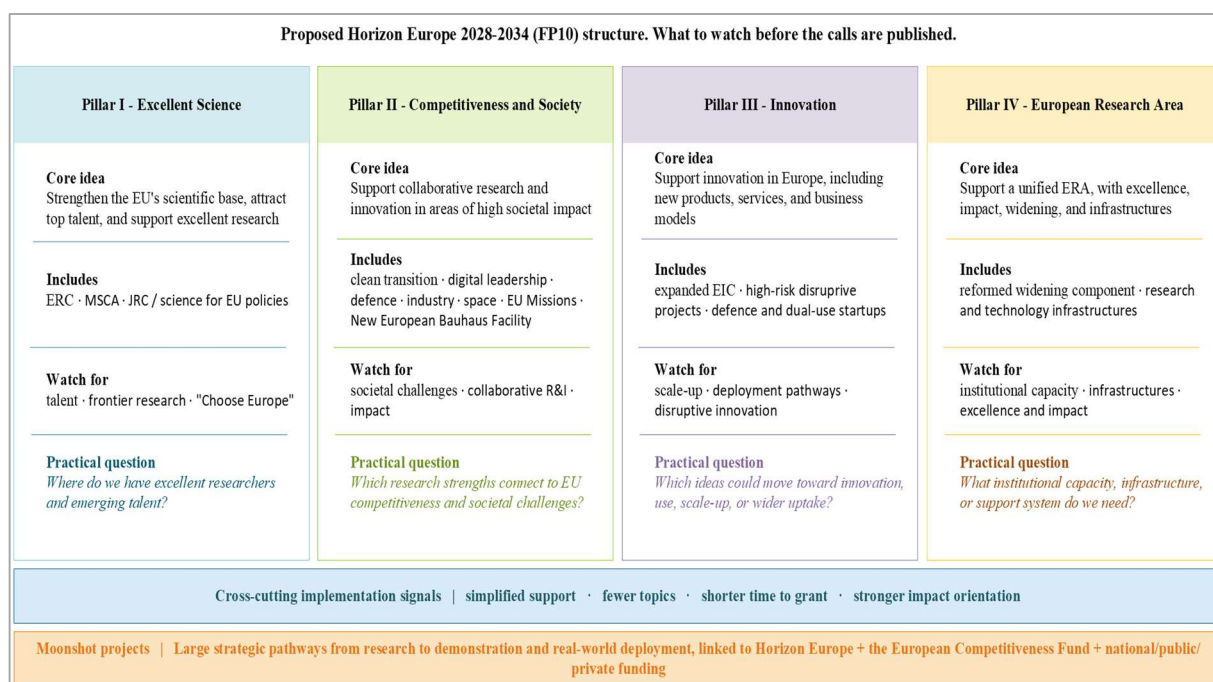


Figure 1. A practical reading of the proposed Horizon Europe 2028-2034 structure¹

(Author's interpretation based on the European Commission's July 2025 proposal; not an official Commission diagram)

The figure should be read as an orientation tool, not as a prediction of future calls. Its purpose is to show that FP10 readiness is not only about monitoring topics once they are published. It is also about understanding the emerging architecture of the programme.

Moonshot projects are still an emerging element of the proposed Horizon Europe 2028-2034 architecture. Unlike EU Missions, which are organised around clear societal goals, and European Partnerships, which structure long-term cooperation between the Commission and public/private partners, moonshot projects appear to focus on large strategic fields where Europe wants to move from research to demonstration and real-world deployment, using

¹ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/horizon-europe-2028-2034-twice-bigger-simpler-faster-and-more-impactful-2025-07-16_en

pooled funding from Horizon Europe, the European Competitiveness Fund, national, public and private sources.

What early EU priority signals may mean for FP10 readiness

Early EU priority signals become useful when they are connected to the likely structure and logic of the future framework programme. The Commission proposal for Horizon Europe 2028-2034 presents the future programme around four pillars: Excellent Science, Competitiveness and Society, Innovation, and the European Research Area. It also introduces a stronger connection with the European Competitiveness Fund and the possibility of large “moonshot projects” moving from research to demonstration and real-world deployment.

For researchers and universities, the practical question is not “Can we predict future calls?” but rather: “Which signals are becoming stable enough to guide early preparation?”

A useful way to read these signals is to group them into three broad categories (Figure 2).

Thematic transformation signals include competitiveness and innovation capacity, the green transition, digital transformation and critical technologies, security, preparedness and resilience, inclusion, democracy and social fairness, and Europe’s global role. These signals indicate the broad European challenges and transitions to which future research and innovation may be expected to contribute.

Capacity-building signals include open strategic autonomy, skills and talent, research and technology infrastructures, institutional capacity, trusted partnerships and knowledge circulation. These signals point to the capabilities Europe needs in order to act: people, methods, data, infrastructure, expertise, standards, networks and long-term research capacity.

Programme-design signals include simplification, impact orientation, fewer topics, shorter time to grant, European Partnerships, EU Missions, the European Innovation Council, research and technology infrastructures and possible moonshot projects. These signals show how broad priorities may become operational through future instruments, calls, pathways and evaluation expectations.

Read in this way, early EU priority signals are not a list of future call titles. They are clues about where research strengths, institutional capacity and funding instruments may meet. For researchers, they help clarify how a project could become relevant in a European context. For universities and research support offices, they help guide early mapping before calls are published.

In practical terms, early EU priority signals can help researchers and universities ask better questions before calls are published:

- Which European challenges does our expertise speak to?
- Which of our research strengths connect to competitiveness, sustainability, digital capacity, resilience, inclusion or strategic autonomy?
- Which researchers, infrastructures, datasets or networks could become relevant in future consortia?
- Which signals appear repeatedly across policy, strategy and programme documents?
- Which instruments should we monitor: collaborative calls, missions, partnerships, infrastructures, EIC schemes or moonshot-style initiatives?
- What support do researchers need now in order to become visible and ready later?

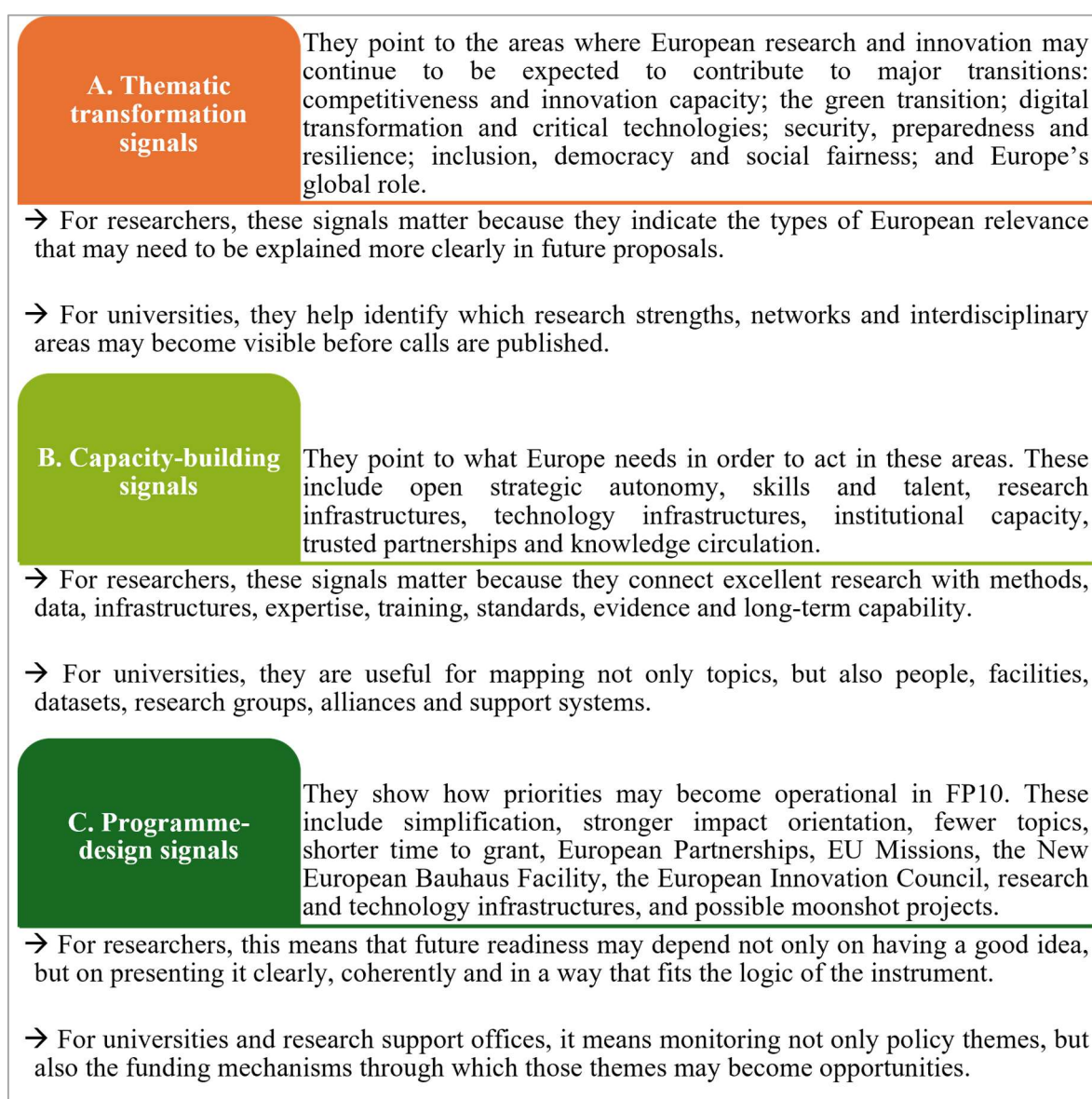


Figure 2. Three categories of early EU priority signals relevant for FP10 readiness

(Author's synthesis and interpretation based on the European Commission priorities 2024-2029², European Union priorities 2024–2029³, Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025–2027⁴, and *Align, Act, Accelerate*⁵; not an official EU diagram)

The purpose is not to turn every research idea into a policy slogan. It is to help researchers and universities recognise where their work may become relevant in the future FP10 landscape, and to prepare earlier, before opportunities become urgent.

² https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029_en

³ https://european-union.europa.eu/priorities-and-actions/eu-priorities/european-union-priorities-2024-2029_en

⁴ https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/strategic-plan_en

⁵ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2f9fc221-86bb-11ef-a67d-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Reading repeated language, not isolated keywords

EU policy and programme documents contain many recurring terms. Some of them may sound abstract or repetitive: competitiveness, resilience, strategic autonomy, simplification, security, sustainability, impact, inclusion, skills, excellence, deployment. Read individually, these words can easily look like general policy language. Read together, across several documents, they can become useful signals.

The point is not to treat every repeated word as a future call topic. A single keyword does not tell researchers what FP10 will fund. What matters is recurrence, convergence and direction of travel. If the same ideas appear in political priorities, R&I strategic orientations, programme proposals, expert reports and stakeholder debates, they are more likely to shape how future calls, instruments and evaluation expectations are framed.

To test this type of reading, the brief also draws on a simple keyword-mapping exercise carried out on selected EU policy and expert documents, including the Draghi⁶, Letta⁷ and Heitor / *Align, Act, Accelerate* (cited above) reports (Table 1). Sentences mentioning recurring priority language were extracted and grouped under broad categories such as competitiveness and innovation capacity, green transition, digital transition, security and resilience, strategic autonomy, simplification, inclusion and democracy, international partnerships, and skills. The purpose was not to count words mechanically, but to observe how similar ideas recur across different documents and begin to form policy-language clusters.

Table 1. Indicative frequency of extracted sentences in the mapping exercise

(Sources: Mario Draghi reports, Part A, Part B – see note 6; Enrico Letta report – see note 7; Manuel Heitor report - see note 5)

Priority-language category	Draghi A	Draghi B	Letta	Heitor
Competitiveness and innovation capacity	219	812	314	133
Green transition, climate, biodiversity, food, water and nature	125	558	244	150
Digital transition, critical technologies and technology sovereignty	166	645	276	184
Security, preparedness and resilience	139	471	364	155
Open strategic autonomy / Europe's capacity to act	7	35	26	15
Simplification / implementation / impact-oriented spending	29	217	253	303
Inclusion / democracy / social fairness and European values	29	88	252	94
International partnerships / Europe's global role	96	480	373	270
Skills / talent / labour gaps	88	454	144	145

⁶ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/draghi-report_en

⁷ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf>

Analytical note

This mapping should be read as an author's working analysis, not as an official classification of EU priorities. The figures are indicative and refer to extracted sentences grouped under broad priority-language categories. They should not be read as a ranking of policy importance, since the selected documents differ in length, purpose and vocabulary. Their value is to show recurrence and clustering across documents, not to provide a quantitative assessment of EU priorities.

A practical way to read repeated language is to look for clusters rather than isolated terms.

For example, **competitiveness** rarely appears alone. It is often connected with innovation, productivity, industrial capacity, critical technologies, skills, investment, startups, deployment and Europe's ability to remain strong in a changing global environment.

For researchers, this does not mean that every project must become market-oriented. It means that the European relevance of research may need to be explained more clearly: how does the work strengthen knowledge, capability, evidence, skills, technology, productivity, policy or innovation capacity?

The **green transition** also appears as a cluster. It is linked with climate change, biodiversity, pollution, food, water, nature, circularity, resilience, adaptation, mitigation and sustainable systems.

This matters because green transition language may be relevant far beyond environmental sciences. It can also affect research in governance, economics, infrastructure, health, behaviour, education, agriculture, regional development, technology and social innovation.

Digital transition language forms another cluster. It is connected with artificial intelligence, data, critical technologies, digital infrastructure, technology sovereignty, cybersecurity, deployment, digital skills, industrial transformation and innovation ecosystems.

Researchers should therefore look not only for calls explicitly labelled as digital, but also for areas where digital capacity, data, AI, technology governance or digital transformation may become part of the expected contribution.

Security and resilience language is also becoming more visible. It may include defence, preparedness, crisis management, cyber risks, infrastructure vulnerability, health crises, food and water security, energy security, democratic resilience, disinformation, social cohesion and the ability to act under uncertainty.

This does not mean that every project should be reframed as a security project. It means that researchers may need to recognise when their work contributes to risk reduction, preparedness, trusted knowledge, system resilience or better decision-making in uncertain conditions.

Simplification and impact form a different type of cluster. They are not thematic priorities in the same way as climate, digital or security. They are programme-design signals. They point

to the way the future programme may be expected to operate: fewer topics, clearer support, shorter time to grant, stronger delivery logic and more visible contribution to European objectives.

For researchers, this may translate into the need for proposals that are not only scientifically strong, but also clear, coherent, readable, well structured and easy to evaluate.

This kind of reading is useful because it prevents two common mistakes. The first mistake is to ignore EU policy language until a call is published. At that point, it may be too late to build partnerships, clarify relevance or position expertise. The second mistake is to overreact to individual buzzwords and force them artificially into research ideas. Good early reading sits between these two extremes. It helps researchers understand the language of the future programme without weakening the integrity of their research.

For researchers, repeated language can help prepare stronger relevance narratives. It can show which European challenges a project may speak to, what contribution needs to be explained, and which terms may help connect excellent science with the wider FP10 context.

For universities and research support offices, repeated language can support early scanning and internal guidance. It can help identify which research groups may become relevant, which interdisciplinary areas should be connected, which infrastructures or datasets matter, and which researchers may need support before calls are published.

Reading repeated language is therefore not about copying EU terminology into proposals. It is about recognising patterns early enough to prepare intelligently. The aim is not to predict FP10 in detail, but to become less surprised when future work programmes and calls start translating these signals into funding opportunities.

What researchers can do with early signals

For researchers, reading EU priorities before calls are published does not mean rewriting their research around policy language. It means becoming more aware of where their expertise may connect with future European research and innovation agendas.

A useful first step is to translate early signals into research questions. Instead of asking only “What calls are open?”, researchers can begin to ask:

- Which European challenges does my research help understand or address?
- What knowledge, methods, data, infrastructure or expertise can I contribute?
- Which part of my work connects to competitiveness, sustainability, digital transformation, resilience, inclusion, security, skills, policy evidence or innovation capacity?
- Which European networks, communities or consortia may need this expertise?
- What kind of role could I credibly play in a collaborative project: scientific partner, methodological contributor, data provider, technology developer, policy analyst, impact contributor, evaluator, demonstrator, trainer or knowledge broker?
- What should I prepare now so that I am not starting from zero when a relevant call appears?

This type of reflection can help researchers build a clearer **European profile** before calls become urgent. A European profile does not need to be a promotional text. It can be a short, practical summary of expertise, methods, infrastructure, previous projects, publications, datasets, networks, and potential contributions to collaborative research.

A practical example - A short European profile

A European profile can be a concise working document that helps a researcher explain where their expertise could fit in future European collaborations. It does not need to be long. One page is often enough.

A simple European profile could include:

- **Research area:** What field, problem or research theme do I work on?
- **Main expertise:** What knowledge, methods, data, tools, technologies or analytical capacity can I contribute?
- **European relevance:** Which broad EU priority signals does my work connect to: competitiveness, sustainability, digital transformation, resilience, inclusion, skills, policy evidence, innovation capacity or strategic autonomy?
- **Previous experience:** Have I participated in EU-funded projects, international collaborations, networks, COST Actions, partnerships, policy work, stakeholder engagement or interdisciplinary projects?
- **Research assets:** Do I have datasets, infrastructures, laboratories, field sites, models, methods, software, case studies or access to specific communities?
- **Potential contribution to a consortium:** Could I contribute as a scientific partner, methodology expert, data provider, technology developer, policy analyst, impact contributor, demonstrator, trainer, evaluator or knowledge broker?
- **Possible partners or networks:** Which organisations, researchers, sectors, regions or communities would be relevant partners?
- **Readiness needs:** What would I need in order to become proposal-ready: partners, clearer positioning, support with impact, updated publications list, concept note, institutional endorsement, infrastructure description or administrative guidance?

The purpose of the profile is not to “sell” the researcher artificially. It is to make expertise visible and understandable before calls are published.

Researchers can also use early signals to prepare **short concept notes**. These do not need to be full proposals. They can simply clarify the problem addressed, the European relevance of the topic, the main research contribution, possible partners, expected users, and the type of impact or capacity the work could support. Even a one-page concept note can make it easier to discuss ideas with research offices, potential coordinators or international partners.

Early signals can also help researchers avoid forced relevance. Not every project needs to claim that it contributes to all EU priorities. A stronger approach is to identify one or two credible connections and explain them clearly. For example, a project may contribute to green transition through resource efficiency, to digital transition through data methods, to resilience through risk analysis, to inclusion through citizen engagement, or to competitiveness through new knowledge, skills, methods or technological capacity.

This is especially important because future FP10 opportunities may emerge through different entry points: excellent science, collaborative research, innovation, missions, partnerships,

infrastructures, EIC schemes or possible moonshot-style initiatives. Researchers do not need to fit everywhere. They need to understand where their work is most credible.

A practical example - A short early concept note

An early concept note is not a proposal. It is a short document that helps a researcher test whether an idea can be connected to future European priorities and discussed with colleagues, research support offices or possible partners.

A simple early concept note could include:

- **Working title:** A clear title for the idea.
- **Problem addressed:** What European or societal challenge does the idea respond to?
- **Research idea:** What is the main scientific question, hypothesis, method or approach?
- **Connection to EU priority signals:** Which signals does the idea connect to: green transition, digital transformation, competitiveness, resilience, inclusion, skills, security, strategic autonomy or Europe's global role?
- **Expected contribution:** What could the project contribute: new knowledge, methods, data, technology, policy evidence, tools, models, training, infrastructure use, social innovation or decision support?
- **Possible users or beneficiaries:** Who could use or benefit from the results: researchers, policymakers, public authorities, industry, civil society, communities, educators, health systems, regions or international partners?
- **Potential partners:** What types of partners would be needed: universities, research organisations, companies, public authorities, NGOs, user groups, infrastructures, cities, regions or international partners?
- **Possible FP10 entry points:** Could the idea fit excellent science, collaborative research, innovation, missions, partnerships, infrastructures, EIC schemes or moonshot-style initiatives?
- **Next step:** What should be done now: refine the idea, scan policy signals, identify partners, prepare a one-page profile, discuss with the research office, monitor relevant instruments or wait for more programme detail?

The value of an early concept note is that it turns a broad idea into something that can be discussed, improved and positioned before the pressure of a deadline.

In practical terms, researchers can start preparing before calls are published by doing five simple things:

1. identify the EU priority signals most relevant to their field;
2. update their European expertise profile;
3. map existing and potential international networks;
4. prepare one or two short concept notes linked to broad European challenges;
5. discuss early fit with research support staff, colleagues or possible partners.

The value of this work is not that it predicts the future call text. It helps researchers become easier to identify, easier to approach and better prepared when opportunities appear.

A practical reading checklist

The following checklist can be used by researchers, research managers and research support offices when reading EU priorities before work programmes and calls are published. It is not meant to predict future calls. It is meant to support earlier thinking, better questions and more structured preparation.

A. Read the signals

- Which themes appear repeatedly across EU policy, strategy and R&I documents?
- Which priorities seem stable rather than temporary?
- Which terms are becoming more visible: competitiveness, resilience, strategic autonomy, simplification, security, sustainability, digital transformation, technology sovereignty, inclusion, democracy, skills, deployment or impact?
- Do these terms appear only once, or do they form repeated clusters across several documents?
- Are the same ideas appearing in different forms: political priorities, strategic orientations, programme architecture, expert reports, stakeholder positions or budget debates?

B. Connect the signals to your research

- Which European challenges does the research help understand, address or anticipate?
- Which broad priority signals does the work connect to most credibly?
- Is the connection thematic, methodological, technological, societal, policy-related, infrastructure-related or capacity-building?
- What does the research contribute: new knowledge, methods, data, evidence, tools, technologies, models, skills, standards, training, infrastructure use, policy insight or social innovation?
- Which users or beneficiaries could be relevant: researchers, policymakers, public authorities, industry, civil society, communities, regions, educators, health systems or international partners?
- What should not be forced? Which EU priorities are not genuinely relevant to this research?

C. Identify possible FP10 entry points

- Could the idea fit excellent science, collaborative research, innovation, missions, partnerships, infrastructures, EIC schemes or possible moonshot-style initiatives?
- Is the idea closer to frontier research, collaborative problem-solving, technology development, policy evidence, social innovation, training, infrastructure use, demonstration or deployment?
- Would the idea need a small expert consortium, a large interdisciplinary consortium, public/private partners, users, policymakers, industry, cities, regions, NGOs or international partners?
- Which part of the proposed FP10 architecture should be monitored most closely?
- Which instruments or communities are already active around this theme?

D. Prepare before the call appears

- Is there a short European profile for the researcher, group or research area?
- Is there a one-page concept note that explains the problem, research idea, European relevance, expected contribution, possible partners and next steps?
- Are relevant publications, projects, datasets, infrastructures, methods and networks easy to present?
- Are potential partners or consortia already known?
- Is there a clear explanation of why this expertise matters in a European context?
- What support is needed now: policy scanning, partner profiling, impact thinking, proposal logic, infrastructure description, budget guidance, ethics support or institutional endorsement?

E. Monitor over the next 6-12 months

- Which EU priority documents should be followed regularly?
- Which stakeholder positions, European Partnerships, Missions, EIC developments, ERA initiatives or Competitiveness Fund discussions are relevant?
- Which terms or topics are becoming more frequent?
- Which areas are moving from broad policy language toward instruments, calls, partnerships, missions or large strategic initiatives?
- Which researchers or groups should be informed early?
- What should be reviewed again when new policy documents, draft work programmes or stakeholder positions appear?

A useful final test is this: if a relevant call were published tomorrow, would the researcher or institution already know what expertise, partners, evidence, infrastructure

and European relevance they could bring? If the answer is no, early reading has a practical purpose. It shows what can be prepared before the deadline pressure begins.

Final reflection: early reading reduces surprise

Reading EU priorities early is not about predicting future calls perfectly. No researcher, university or research support office can know in advance exactly how future work programmes will translate political priorities, strategic orientations and programme debates into call topics.

The value of early reading is different. It helps researchers and institutions recognise direction before details become fixed. It shows which themes are becoming more visible, which types of language are repeated across documents, which programme instruments may matter, and where research expertise may become relevant.

For researchers, this can reduce the feeling of starting from zero when a call is published. A clearer European profile, a short concept note, an understanding of relevant signals, and an initial view of possible partners can make future opportunities easier to assess and discuss.

For universities and research support offices, early reading can support more structured preparation. It can help identify relevant research groups, map interdisciplinary strengths, follow emerging instruments, prepare internal guidance and support researchers before deadlines create pressure.

The purpose is not to make research follow policy language mechanically. Excellent research should not be weakened by artificial relevance claims. The point is to understand the European context well enough to explain credible relevance when it exists.

FP10 readiness therefore starts before calls are published. It starts with learning how to read signals, recognise patterns, prepare expertise, and ask better questions. This can make the difference between reacting late to opportunities and entering future calls with clearer positioning, stronger partnerships and more confidence.

Annex - Example: using the checklist for an early research idea

Imagine a research group working on climate resilience and urban health. There is no specific FP10 call yet. The group wants to understand whether its expertise could become relevant in the future programme.

Early signals noticed

The group sees repeated language around the green transition, climate adaptation, resilience, health, data, cities, infrastructure, social fairness and preparedness. These signals appear across EU policy and R&I documents, even before specific future calls are published.

Possible European relevance

The research could contribute to understanding how heatwaves, air pollution, vulnerable infrastructure and social inequalities affect urban health. It could also support better local preparedness, evidence-based planning, risk reduction and more resilient public services.

Research contribution

The group could contribute climate and health data analysis, urban case studies, risk models, policy evidence, stakeholder engagement, and recommendations for municipalities or public health authorities.

Potential FP10 entry points

The idea might connect to collaborative research under Competitiveness and Society, EU Missions related to cities or climate adaptation, research infrastructures or data-related initiatives, and possibly wider resilience or health-related calls. It is probably not an EIC-type innovation project yet, unless it develops a specific tool, service or deployable solution.

Partners to consider

Relevant partners could include universities, public health institutes, municipalities, climate services, data specialists, civil protection bodies, urban planners, NGOs working with vulnerable communities, and possibly technology providers.

What to prepare before calls are published

The group could prepare a short European profile, a one-page concept note, a map of available datasets and case studies, a list of possible city or public health partners, and a short explanation of how the work connects to green transition, resilience, health, social fairness and preparedness.

Why this helps

If a relevant call appears later, the group will not start from zero. It will already know its European relevance, possible contribution, missing partners and likely entry points in the future programme.