

BEYOND PARTICIPATION:

EMPOWERING WIDENING
COUNTRIES IN FP10 FOR A
STRONGER, MORE
COMPETITIVE EUROPE

A Science|Business Widening roundtable

26 JUNE 2025

INESC Brussels HUB
Rue du Luxembourg 3, Brussels

In partnership with:

As the European Union (EU) enters a crucial period for shaping its next research and innovation (R&I) framework programme (FP10) and multi-year budget (MFF), the debate on the future of its Widening instrument grows increasingly heated. Considering the geopolitical and economic realities that Europe faces, many argue it is time to reframe the narrative and elevate Widening to a strategic imperative - not just in the interests of fair distribution of EU resources, but as a key mechanism to ensure resilience, strategic autonomy, inclusive green and digital transitions, and more.

Within this context, the parameters of debate shift quickly to the role of Widening countries in the EU's new institutional mandate, including defence and security, enlargement, competitiveness and single market reform. In line with President von der Leyen's political guidelines, research and innovation (R&I) are expected to play a central role in achieving all of the European Commission's major objectives – implying both an urgent need to better integrate Widening country R&I ecosystems into flagship plans and programmes, and a more ambitious blend of policy instruments to optimise their impact.

Against this backdrop, Science|Business – in partnership with the INESC Brussels HUB and other members of its Widening initiative steering group - is convening a high-level, hybrid forum on June 26 to explore potential solutions and pathways forward for EU decision makers. Drawing on evidence-based analysis of the effectiveness of current instruments, the event will discuss bold policy approaches to position Widening countries at the heart of Europe's strategic competitiveness agenda, and to “turbo-charge” R&I measures for Widening countries in FP10.

13:30 Networking Lunch

14:00 Welcome and opening remarks

- **Ricardo Miguéis**, Head of Office, INESC Brussels HUB
- **Edit Herczog**, Chair, Widening Initiative, Science|Business

14:10 The role of Widening countries in the fast-changing world

As Europe confronts growing geopolitical tensions and technological competition, the role of Widening countries is increasingly recognised as pivotal to the EU's strategic autonomy and resilience. Positioned at the Union's external borders, these countries sit on significant untapped talent and research capacity. Continuing to develop this potential could substantially enhance the EU's global competitiveness in research and innovation (R&I).

However, evolving political priorities, such as the recent requirement for EU member-states to allocate 5% (3.5% plus 1.5%) of GDP to defence, pose a potential risk to national R&I investment if not done strategically. This shift may be particularly challenging for Widening countries, whose research ecosystems are more vulnerable to such budgetary allocations. In this context, two key questions arise:

- What role can Widening countries play in strengthening the EU's strategic autonomy through research and innovation?
- How might the changing political and budgetary landscape affect their capacity to fulfil this role?

Moderated by Edit Herczog

15:20 Coffee Break

15:40 The role of different instruments to generate impact

In light of the mid-term evaluation of the Horizon Europe programme and the shifting priorities discussed in the previous session, what are the learnings from the existing instruments, and how can they be geared towards the future to generate greater impact?

Widening countries are a heterogeneous group with different engagement and funding mechanisms. To design a streamlined solution requires a better understanding of the needs and obstacles of these countries as well as the elasticity of the instruments. This requires an amplified voice for Widening actors to turbo-charge R&I measures in FP10. In this context, key questions arise:

- How should Widening instruments evolve to foster leadership, institutional capacity, and structural transformation in FP10?
- What policy changes or financial innovations are needed to better align with broader EU objectives?
- How can governance and evaluation mechanisms be updated to ensure Widening countries have a stronger voice and fairer opportunity to influence and benefit from EU R&I policy?
- What strategies can ensure that R&I investments translate into long-term economic and societal value, countering brain drain and enhancing competitiveness?

Moderated by Ricardo Miguéis

17:00 End of roundtable



JOÃO CLARO

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, INESC TEC

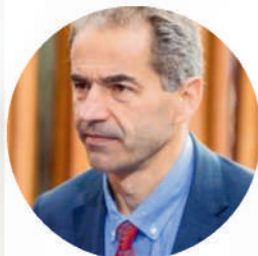
João Claro is chairman and chief executive officer of INESC TEC and professor of industrial engineering and management at the faculty of engineering of the University of Porto (FEUP). He is also director of the doctoral programme in engineering and public policy at FEUP, president of the academic council, and head of entrepreneurship and innovation at Porto Business School (PBS). His area of focus is technology management and policy. João currently serves as scientific director of the UT Austin Portugal Program. In recent years, he has worked closely with Carnegie Mellon University, namely as national director of the Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program, and with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as visiting scholar. He was member of the board of the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO) between 2020 and 2023. João holds a Ph.D. degree in electrical and computer engineering from FEUP (2008), an M.Sc. degree in quantitative methods in management from PBS (2002), and an undergraduate degree in electrical and computer engineering from FEUP (1993).



BERNHARD FABIANEK

Senior Expert - Horizon Europe Association, DG RTD, European Commission

Bernhard Fabianek is senior expert for the Western Balkans at the European Commission since 2020, where he coordinates the innovation component of the economic and investment plan 'Western Balkans Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport'. Previously, he worked on developments in the area of physical sciences and engineering, with activities such as the SESAME synchrotron facility in the Middle East. Bernhard has held various positions within the Commission since 1996, working on photonic technologies, high-speed networking, GÉANT and e-Infrastructures. Under his leadership, the concept of Global Virtual Research Communities was developed and implemented. He was also responsible for the area of high performance computing – the PRACE initiative – facilitating the creation of a pan-European high performance computing infrastructure. Bernhard has been principal author of the communication to the Council and European Parliament "High-Performance Computing: Europe's place in a global race".



MANUEL HEITOR

Chair, Expert Group on Interim Evaluation of Horizon Europe, European Commission; Full Professor, Instituto Superior Técnico

Manuel Heitor was the chair of the Commission's expert group working on the interim evaluation report of Horizon Europe "Align, act, accelerate". At the moment, he is a professor at the Instituto Superior Técnico (IST), the engineering school at the University of Lisbon which he founded in 1998. He also has visiting roles at New York University's Centre for Urban Science and Progress and Marron Institute, and Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. Previously, Manuel served as minister for science, technology and higher education for the government of Portugal (November 2015 - March 2022) and as secretary of state for science, technology and higher education (March 2005 - June 2011). He is honorary member of the European Academy of Cancer Sciences and corresponding member of the Royal Academy of Engineering, Spain. Manuel was also founding member of the S&T Council of the International Risk Governance Council, and of Globelics.



MIKEL LANDABASO ALVAREZ

Director, Fair and Sustainable Economy, JRC, European Commission

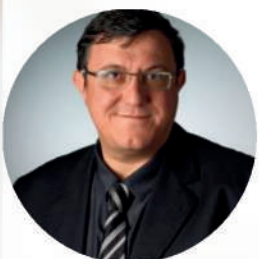
Mikel Landabaso Alvarez has worked in the European Commission since 1990, currently holding the position of director for fair and sustainable economy, and manager of the Sevilla site at the Joint Research Centre. Previously, he was director for strategy and corporate communication at the directorate-general for communication under the President's cabinet. Prior to that, he has worked as head of cabinet of regional policy and was head of several units. Before joining the European Commission, Mikel was head of the research department and assistant to the director general of the Basque Innovation Agency. He has written chapters on economic development in several books and international journals.



INÊS LYNCE

President, INESC-ID; Chair, INESC Brussels HUB

Inês Lynce is professor and researcher at INESC-ID, currently also serving as its president. She is a well-established researcher in the broad field of artificial intelligence, namely in constraint solving and optimisation. Her main contributions refer to developing search algorithms and applying those algorithms to solve practical problems. Inês received the 2008 Deloitte-ULisbon award and the 2009 Premela award from the Portuguese Association for Artificial Intelligence. Since 2020 she has been serving on the editorial board of the Artificial Intelligence Journal (AIJ). She has been co-organiser of the 2018 SAT-SMT-AR summer school and co-chair of the 21st International Conference on Theory and Applications of Satisfiability Testing (SAT'19). Inês publishes at and is a recurrent member of the programme committees of the IJCAI, AAAI, ECAI, CP, and SAT conferences.



JOSÉ LUIS MARTÍNEZ PEÑA

Chair, ESFRI

José Luis Martínez Peña is chair of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) for the period 2024-2026. From July 2016 to present, he has been appointed member of the evaluation commission on nuclear waste of the French National Assembly and French Senate. From 2007 to 2012, he was deputy director general of the European research infrastructure, Institut Laue Langevin de Grenoble. Prior to that, José Luis spent 8 years in research management positions, being deputy director general for research projects at the state secretariat for R&D, and in 1992 joined CSIC's institute of materials science in Madrid. He had several research stays at the Brookhaven National Laboratory (1984-1985) and the Nagoya Institute of Technology in Japan (1982-83), becoming full professor of physics at the University of Madrid (1984-1987). José holds a Ph.D. degree in materials physics from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.



JÖRG NIEHOFF

Deputy Head of Unit, ERA Spreading Excellence & Research Careers, DG RTD, European Commission

Jörg Niehoff is deputy head of unit for ERA, Spreading Excellence and Research Careers in the European Commission directorate-general for research and innovation. He has more than 15 years of experience with the coordination of national research policies, programmes and European partnerships. Jörg started his professional career as a researcher and technology consultant at the Fraunhofer Institute for Laser Technology and was head of the Brussels office for VDI, Europe's largest engineering association. He holds degrees in engineering and in industrial engineering, and has a Ph.D. degree from the RWTH Aachen.



PAULO JORGE PEIXEIRO DE FREITAS

Director, INESC Microsystems and Nanotechnologies

Paulo Jorge Peixeiro de Freitas is presently director of INESC Microsystems and Nanotechnologies and is responsible for the magnetism research group. His current research interests include GMR heads for ultra high density recording, spin-dependent tunneling junctions, non-volatile memories, magnetic multilayers and thin films, micromagnetism, transport phenomena, GMR sensors, bioelectronics and biosensors. Since 1990, he has been at the Instituto Superior Tecnico, where he is full professor in the physics department. Between 1986-1987, he held a post-doctoral fellow at IBM in Yorktown Heights, US, where he worked on magnetic thin films and high TC superconductors. Paulo received his Ph.D degree in solid state physics from Carnegie Mellon University in 1986. His thesis topic involved the study of magnetoresistance in CoFe thin films.



PAUL RÜBIG

Member, European Economic and Social Committee

Paul Rübig has been member of the administrative board of the European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) since 2024. Since 2020, he has also been member of the European Economic and Social Committee, where he serves as rapporteur for numerous opinions and reports, including "A New ERA for R&I", "A Pact for R&I in Europe", "Administrative Burdens", and most recently, "INT/1075". From 2017 to 2019, he was part of the parliamentary conference of the World Trade Organisation. Between 1996 and 2019, he served as member of the European Parliament, representing the European People's Party (EPP) and was full member of both the committee on industry, research and energy, and the committee on budgets. Prior to his political career, he worked within the Rübig Group and started several businesses.



TARIK ZAIMOVIĆ

Rector, University of Sarajevo

Tarik Zaimović is rector of the University of Sarajevo, elected for the period 2024-2028. Prior to that he was appointed vice-rector for finance in 2019, in which role he oversaw the financial stabilisation of the university, improving its budget and enabling greater investment in research, infrastructure and academic programmes. Previously in his career, he has held various key positions, such as portfolio manager for e-Government at the UNDP Bosnia and Herzegovina, and co-chair of the e-Government board of the council of ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he played a pivotal role in advancing the country's digital infrastructure. His leadership in the development and management of ICT portfolios has had a lasting impact on the technological landscape of the region. He was instrumental in the establishment of the e-NET Center, the first distance learning center in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Tarik has authored 11 textbooks and over 40 scientific articles, and he has led or contributed to over 50 projects.



EDIT HERCZOG

Chair, Widening Initiative, SciencelBusiness

Edit Herczog is chair of the SciencelBusiness Widening Group. She holds the position of director general of Vision & Values situated in Brussels and is vice-chair of the Administrative Board of the European Union's Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER). She is senior EU liaison adviser to GÉANT, board member of Research Data Alliance Europe, a former member of the Global Council (2017-2023), co-chair of the RDA FAIR data maturity model working group, and serves on the board of the Transatlantic Policy Network (TPN). Prior to establishing her company, she served two terms as member in the European Parliament (2004-2014). Before that, she was member of the Hungarian Parliament in which role she was delegate to the Council of Europe. Before her political engagement, she worked in the private sector as regional sales and technical manager for the specialty chemicals company, National Starch & Chemical (part of Unilever and later ICI). She was research fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, teaching assistant at the University of Horticulture and holds a certificate of company direction for strategic marketing, financial management and company law from the Institute of Directors. Edit has an M.Sc. degree in food conservation engineering.



RICARDO MIGUÉIS

Head of Office, INESC Brussels HUB

Ricardo Miguéis has 20 years of experience in research, research management and science and technology policy in Europe and Latin America. He managed projects at DINÂMIA-CET (Lisbon University Institute) and was national contact point for the 7th EU framework programme for research. He later coordinated strategic projects at Ciência Viva (2010-2012). As advisor to the Portuguese research council (FCT), he led the development and implementation of the national roadmap for research infrastructures. He served as national delegate for Horizon 2020 and ESFRI, chairing the energy strategy group. Ricardo also chaired the implementation board of the European Marine Biology Resource Centre and Science Europe's working group on research infrastructures. He then became chief of staff to the secretary of state for science, technology and higher education in Portugal's XXIst Constitutional Government. Most recently, he designed funding programmes for research and technology organisations at the national innovation agency and was deputy secretary-general and senior R&I advisor at CESAER.

PARTICIPANTS

- **Jesus Alcober**, Project Coordinator, auPAEU; Associate Professor, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (online)
- **Mattias Björnmalm**, Secretary General, CESAER
- **José Carlos Caldeira**, Advisor to the Chairperson, INESC TEC
- **João Claro**, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, INESC TEC
- **Sorin Costreie**, President, UNICA (online)
- **Dimitri Corpakis**, Senior Expert, Friends of Smart Specialisation
- **Maija Dambrova**, Board Member, Alliance4Life
- **Sanja Damjanović**, Senior Researcher, GSI Helmholtz Centre for Heavy Ion Research (online)
- **Bernhard Fabianek**, Senior Expert - Horizon Europe Association, DG RTD, European Commission
- **Anne-Charlotte Fauvel**, EU Relations Lead, EMBL
- **Elitsa Gieva**, Vice-Rector, Research and Development, TU Sofia (online)
- **Edit Herczog**, Chair, Widening Initiative, Science|Business
- **Manuel Heitor**, Professor, Instituto Superior Técnico (online)
- **Mikel Landabaso Alvarez**, Director, Fair and Sustainable Economy, JRC, European Commission (online)
- **Inês Lynce**, President, INESC-ID; Chair, INESC Brussels HUB
- **José Luis Martínez Peña**, Chair, ESFRI (online)
- **Ricardo Miguéis**, Head of Office, INESC Brussels Hub
- **Manuel Irun Molina**, Liaison Officer, European Institute of Innovation and Technology
- **Jörg Niehoff**, Deputy Head of Unit, ERA, Spreading Excellence & Research Careers, DG RTD, European Commission
- **Katrin Niglas**, Vice Rector for Research; Professor of Data Analysis (online)
- **Kamil Novak**, Expert Advisor; Acting Head of Office, SLORD
- **Paulo Jorge Peixeiro de Freitas**, Director, INESC Microsystems and Nanotechnologies
- **Anne-Catherine Rota**, Strategic Engagement, Research Intelligence, Elsevier
- **Paul Rübig**, Member, European Economic and Social Committee
- **Brigita Serafinavičiūtė**, Research Attaché, Permanent Representation of Lithuania to the EU
- **Loizos Solomou**, Research and Innovation Attaché, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU
- **Gyula Sümeghy**, Head of Cabinet of International Affairs, HUN-REN Hungarian Research Network (online)
- **Doinita Ulinici**, Head of Office, MOST – Moldovan Office for Science and Technology
- **Iris Uribesalgo**, Policy Officer, EU-LIFE
- **Sophie Wulk**, EU Policy Advisor, Leibniz Association
- **Cağrı Yıldırım**, Head, EU Framework Programmes Department, TÜBİTAK
- **Tarik Zaimović**, Rector, University of Sarajevo (online)
- **Saša Zelenika**, Laboratory Head; Professor, University of Rijeka (online)
- **Maciej Zdanowicz**, EU Policy Advisor, NCBR Brussels Office

OBSERVERS

- **Egita Aizsilniece-Ibema**, Head of Office, Latvian Office for Innovation and Technology in Brussels
- **Elke Dall**, Representative in Brussels, Senior Expert, ZSI (online)
- **Katarína Halušková**, Policy Officer, Science|Business
- **Korina Kominou**, Policy Officer, INESC Brussels HUB
- **Sabina Kozłowska**, Senior Specialist, Social Transformations and Resilience Partnership, National Science Centre (online)
- **Denitsa Nikolova**, Programme Manager, Science|Business
- **Eve Päärendson**, Head, EU Office in Brussels, Enterprise Estonia (online)
- **Kamila Twardowska**, Senior International Cooperation Officer, National Science Centre



In partnership with:

