

**2,000+**

Researchers & staff across Portugal, working at the intersection of academia, industry, and society.

**5 institutes**

INESC Coimbra, INESC ID, INESC INOV, INESC MN, INESC TEC,

**1980**

Founded in 1980 with a mission to bridge academic research and industrial innovation

**25+ R&D Centres**

Driving innovation across strategic domains e.g power and energy systems, advanced computing, artificial intelligence, data science, bioengineering and health

**6+ locations**

Sites in Portugal and Internationally

**700+**

Track Record: 700+ Horizon 2020 projects, 130 coordinated · patents · spin-offs · EU policy impact



**13 July 2026**

## **Position Paper**–Response to the European Commission’s Call for Evidence for the Single Basic Act for European Partnerships

# **INESC Brussels HUB**

Liaison office of the INESC Research & Innovation Ecosystem. The INESC Brussels HUB is a strategic bridge between INESC – Portugal’s leading research and technology organisation – and European and global stakeholders. It is a vital partner to universities and companies, a continuous supporter of science-based policy-making, and a trusted contributor to key dialogues about future R&I agendas and priorities.



## **INESC Position Paper–Response to the European Commission’s Call for Evidence for the Single Basic Act for European Partnerships implemented as Joint Undertakings under Horizon Europe 2028–2034**

### **Support for the Single Basic Act for Joint Undertakings**

INESC welcomes the European Commission’s objective of a more coherent and streamlined partnership portfolio approach under Horizon Europe 2028–2034 and supports the creation of a Single Basic Act (SBA) providing legal certainty, harmonised rules and cross-sector synergies for future Joint Undertakings. Joint Undertakings have proven their value in bridging research and deployment and in structuring long-term collaboration between industry, research organisations, the EU and Member States. Their reform should strengthen, not narrow, the participation of the research-performing actors that provide the scientific and technological base on which the partnerships’ industrial ambitions are founded.

For INESC institutes, two design choices will determine whether the SBA achieves this. First, the future JU landscape should be built around coherent technology communities with clearly defined missions, rather than strictly around European Competitiveness Fund policy windows: critical enabling technologies are inherently cross-cutting and do not map onto a single window. Second, no fixed minimum Union contribution threshold, such as the EUR 2 billion figure in the European Parliament’s draft position, should condition the establishment of Joint Undertakings. Such a threshold is the provision most likely to eliminate focused, critical-technology partnerships in favour of very large and super concentrated JU s.

### **INESC’s footprint across the critical technologies the SBA will govern**

The INESC institutes INESC Coimbra, INESC-ID, INESC INOV, INESC MN and INESC TEC constitute the largest research organisation ecosystem in Portugal, bringing together more than 2,500 researchers and research administrators. Founded in 1980, INESC has established itself over more than four decades as a leading example of university–industry partnership in Europe, with an outstanding track record in the EU Framework Programmes, long-term industrial collaborations and public services contracts. INESC Institutes’ applied research, technology and research infrastructures offering testing and demonstration facilities and the interdisciplinary expertise they provide support the knowledge-to-innovation journey and the industrial deployment of excellent research.



Elements that boost Europe's competitiveness and contribute to societal resilience and prosperity.

INESC's activity sits squarely within the critical technologies the SBA will govern; high-performance computing and AI hardware sovereignty, smart networks and services, advanced manufacturing, AI, data and robotics, microelectronics and photonics through cleanroom infrastructure, and a prominent role in the Portuguese national Microelectronics Agenda.

Beyond generating knowledge, the INESC institutes operate both research infrastructures and technology infrastructures, cleanrooms, pilot and testing facilities, and living labs serving academia, industry, and public administration across the full spectrum from fundamental research to industrial deployment. It is from this position, as an operator of critical-technology capabilities in a Member State whose national investment strategy is still consolidating, that INESC advocates for the three points below.

### **Three asks for the Single Basic Act**

#### **1. Preserve cross-TRL coverage and framework conditions for infrastructure operators**

INESC endorses the ambition to cover the full innovation-to-investment journey. However, non-profit research actors are not only knowledge providers: they operate the technology and research infrastructures that make mid-TRL work possible for industry. A shift of JU activities towards high TRLs without adequate framework conditions for non-profit infrastructure operators would redirect funding towards large industrial players while removing the very de-risking layer on which those players depend. The SBA should therefore safeguard mid-TRL activities and establish funding conditions that make participation as core partners attractive for universities and RTOs, equivalent to those applied elsewhere in the Framework Programme.

## 2. Full recognition of in-kind contributions

INESC firmly opposes any shift towards predominantly cash-based contribution models and cautions against the threshold of EUR 2 Billion minimum Union contribution for JUs. The push towards cash contributions appears as the first specific objective of this call for evidence and must be addressed directly: in-kind contributions are the substance of what research organisations bring to Joint Undertakings and, in INESC's case, this critical mass lies in access to cleanroom and pilot facilities, testing and characterisation services, and highly qualified researcher time. The valuation of in-kind researcher time should rely on the same certified costing methodologies already accepted across Horizon Europe, actual or average personnel costs, and existing unit-cost approaches for access to research infrastructures, rather than requiring JU-specific accounting systems that smaller non-profit institutes cannot cost-effectively maintain. Replacing recognition of these contributions with cash requirements would structurally exclude non-profit research actors and weaken the partnerships' technological base.

## 3. Accessibility: aligning national and European commitment

Accessibility to Joint Undertakings has a multilevel dimension that the current debate largely overlooks. JUs are tripartite structures involving the EU, Member States and industry. This model carries an inherent risk for research organisations operating in Member States that lack a strong national investment strategy aligned with EU goals: where national commitment is weak or absent, entities from these Member States are structurally uncompetitive within the JU, irrespective of their scientific and technological merit. Portugal illustrates this dynamic: low national co-investment, reflecting the absence of a national investment strategy aligned with the European one, has constrained the participation of highly relevant research actors in JUs of strategic importance.

### The new SBA should therefore:

- Ensure that JU membership and governance remain open to research organisations from all Member States, with formal recognition of RTOs in JU governance structures;

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- provide transparency on Member States' commitments under the SBA; and
- introduce mechanisms preventing national co-funding asymmetries from becoming participation barriers, accompanied by systematic monitoring of the geographic and actor-type distribution of JU participation.



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For more information, please contact:

**Ricardo Migueis**, [ricardo.migueis@inesctec.pt](mailto:ricardo.migueis@inesctec.pt) (Head of Office, INESC Brussels HUB),

**Korina Kominou**, [korina.kominou@inesctec.pt](mailto:korina.kominou@inesctec.pt) (Policy Officer, INESC Brussels HUB)