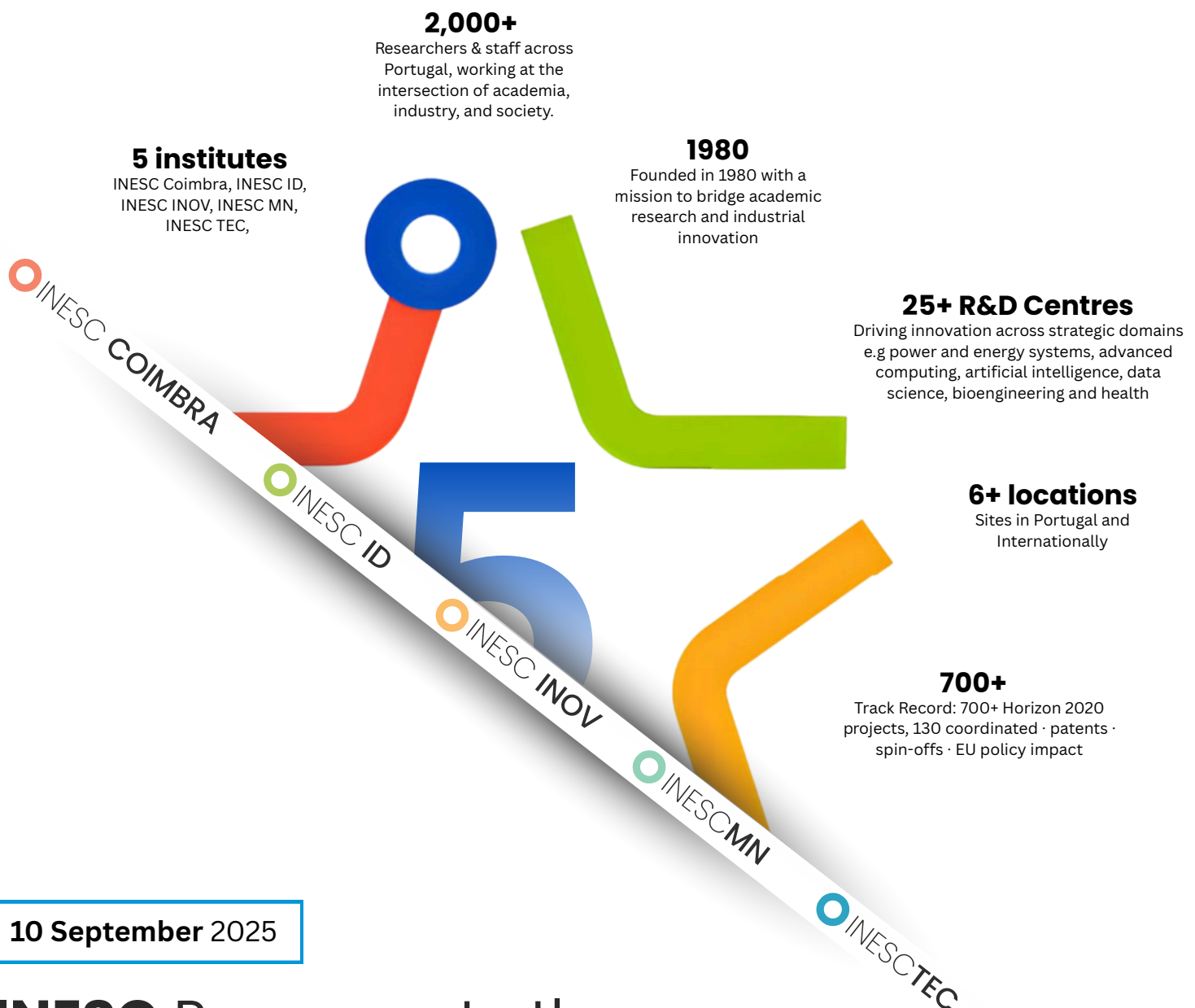




10 September 2025

INESC Response to the EC Consultation on ERA ACT

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 Response to the EC Consultation on ERA ACT

INESC institutes endorse the ERA Act's ambition to make the 3% R&D target real. As Portugal's leading RTO ecosystem bridging universities, polytechnics, industry, and regions, INESC delivers applied research in advanced computing, energy systems, AI, robotics, microelectronics, telecommunications, production technologies, among others, translating science into productivity across sectors and regional development. We urge the ERA Act to pair competitiveness with widening and cohesion, so that the fifth freedom, free movement of knowledge, researchers, and technology, reduces structural disparities while advancing the green and digital transitions.

Policy Block 1: Achieving the 3% R&D Target and Investment Target

We advocate making the 3% R&D investment target binding with clear national and regional investment roadmaps linked to FP10 and cohesion policy. These roadmaps should be embedded in an EU R&I Semester, with annual monitoring, public scorecards, and Commission recommendations to track Member States' progress. These roadmaps must be tailored for differentiated trajectories across MS to support fair convergence without penalising less advanced regions. This approach helps address structural disparities and ensures fair progress across Europe while promoting widening and cohesion, especially from a Southern European perspective. We also stress that a significant portion of investment must go to applied industry driven research to unlock private investments alongside public funding. To reinforce private engagement, the ERA Act should encourage minimum public-to-private co-investment ratios (e.g., 1:1 leverage) and support Member States in deploying R&D tax incentives aligned with EU priorities.

Policy Block 2: Alignment of Investments, Priorities, and Research and Technology Infrastructures

Robust alignment of investments and research priorities between EU, national, and regional levels is critical. We urge the establishment of a new strengthened coordination mechanism for research and technology infrastructures, and we emphasize the need to simplify and declutter FP10 architecture. Simplification should focus on consolidating overlapping instruments, reducing administrative burden, and ensuring clearer entry points for RTOs, universities and SMEs.



Breaking down silos and fostering fluid integration between EU, national and regional strategies and funding is essential for strategic coherence. From a Southern European perspective, research and technology infrastructures must also be designed as instruments of cohesion. For that end, a political decision to deconcentrate value-chains and mobilise capacity across the EU is crucial. Ensuring equitable location-decisions and access to cutting-edge infrastructures across all regions will help reduce the persistent R&I divide and enable fair participation in Europe's green and digital transitions. INESC institutes bring valuable hands-on experience in mapping and validating infrastructure needs for multilevel strategic planning, and we stand ready to contribute our methodologies to support the Commission's work on the upcoming European Strategy for Research and Technology Infrastructures.

Policy Block 3: Improving Framework Conditions – Careers and Mobility

Attracting and retaining talents requires improving framework conditions that will prioritise careers and mobility for researchers. This requires a common ERA Career Framework with minimum standards on employment conditions, portability of social rights, and recognition of experience across academia, RTOs, and industry. INESC institutes call for moving beyond soft measures by creating a systemic EU approach to knowledge valorization and professionalization of non-academic career paths in RTOs and RPOs. Researchers' work precariousness must be addressed with an overarching ERA career framework including early-career support and enhanced mobility schemes. We propose a dedicated EU programme for RTO-industry mobility to complement academic pathways.

Policy Block 4: Scientific Freedom and Research Security

The European Research Area must become the world's most trusted knowledge space globally, underpinning the "fifth freedom", the free movement of knowledge, researchers, and ideas. ERA must remove barriers to knowledge-sharing caused by inconsistent open science rules and limited access to reliable data in the EU. Harmonisation should build on the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and European Data Spaces, ensuring FAIR principles, rights retention for publicly funded results, and seamless access for researchers across sectors. At the same time openness should be balanced with strong safeguards against foreign interference and intellectual property leakage, establishing EU-wide research security frameworks and coherent protocols.



We call for the effective implementation of common EU-wide protocols on research security and intellectual property protection. In parallel, the ERA Act should make Europe a safe haven for researchers at risk worldwide, creating targeted fellowships and mobility schemes that strengthen Europe's global leadership in protecting scientific freedom. This approach will support both integration and protection in the geopolitical landscape while maintaining trust and integrity for a fostered collaboration.

INESC's Recommendations

1. Focus on the translation of knowledge from knowledge generation to market uptake. Establish a European mechanism, anchored in FP10 and coordinated with national and regional instruments, that focuses on the translation of knowledge from research production to industrial and societal uptake.

This mechanism should:

- Support applied R&D&I projects and infrastructures (pilot lines, demonstrators, testbeds) that connect excellent science with market deployment.
- Create dedicated pathways for knowledge valorisation, linking universities, RTOs, SMEs, and industry, and scaling proven innovations across sectors and regions.
- Align funding levels (EU–national–regional) to ensure continuity from research grants to deployment investment, reducing the “valley of death” between production of knowledge and its uptake.

By focusing on translation, the ERA Act can amplify the impact of Europe's fundamental research, turning scientific excellence into industrial competitiveness, societal resilience, and technological sovereignty.

2. Focus on alignment and coherence of research and innovation agendas. Ensure stronger coordination and monitoring of national and regional research agendas against EU priorities through an EU R&I Semester mechanism.

This process should:

- Require national and regional investment roadmaps linked to FP10 and cohesion funds.
- Include an annual monitoring cycle with scorecards and Commission recommendations, promoting accountability and transparency.



- Foster strategic coherence between EU-level key priorities, national smart specialisation strategies, and regional innovation ecosystems, avoiding duplication and ensuring complementarity.
- Strengthen the role of research and technology infrastructures (RTIs) as shared assets bridging EU and national agendas.

3. Focus on developing an ERA Career Framework for talent and mobility. Adopt a comprehensive ERA Career Framework to improve researchers' working conditions, career stability, and mobility across Europe.

This framework should:

- Set minimum employment standards and ensure portability of social rights and pensions across Member States.
- Provide dedicated early-career support, including stabilisation grants and mentoring schemes, especially in regions where precariousness is most acute.
- Launch a dedicated EU RTO–industry mobility programme, complementing academic pathways and valorising non-academic career trajectories.
- Introduce a fast-track visa and permit scheme for researchers, with mutual recognition of qualifications to enable seamless mobility.

4. Focus on measures to safeguard scientific freedom and research security. Make the ERA the world's most trusted knowledge space, balancing openness with security.

The ERA Act should:

- Establish minimum EU standards for scientific freedom and institutional autonomy, ensuring researchers' independence across all Member States.
- Harmonise open science practices by building on the EOSC and European Data Spaces, ensuring FAIR principles, rights retention for publicly funded research, and seamless access to reliable data.
- Ensure effective implementation of EU-wide research security protocols with due diligence tools, partner risk assessments, and guidelines for secure international cooperation.

Position Europe as a safe haven for researchers at risk, offering targeted fellowships and mobility schemes that reinforce the EU's global leadership in defending scientific freedom.