

Research and Innovation for the Future of Europe

A Manifesto to promote the discussion on R&I issues
within the Conference on the Future of Europe and beyond

The Conference on the Future of Europe is a unique opportunity for European citizens to reflect and debate on Europe's challenges and priorities: a citizens-focused, bottom-up exercise for Europeans to have their say on what they expect from the Union. As stated in the joint declaration, the EU must provide inclusive answers to our generation-defining tasks: achieving the green and digital transitions, ensuring a fair, sustainable and competitive economy, addressing geopolitical challenges in the post-COVID-19 global environment.

Research and innovation have shown to be key drivers to address those challenges and therefore R&I issues have been increasingly preeminent in the EU political agenda. The Recovery Plan for Europe NextGenerationEU will mobilise significant resources to support R&I activities. 2021 has also marked the launch of Horizon Europe, the most ambitious EU R&I programme ever with a budget of €95.5 billion over seven years. Despite its central role, research and innovation do not appear among the selected priority topics of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

There is no doubt that the future of Europe and its citizens will be largely linked to our performance in science and technology. The Conference offers the opportunity to reflect once again on the vital role that R&I plays for Europeans' prosperity and well-being, and thus for ultimately nurturing our common values of peace and freedom.

There is also a momentum Europe needs to seize. The pandemic has brought science and technology at the heart of public debate. The relevance of international collaboration in research and innovation has never been so clearly perceived by public opinion. The development and production of Covid vaccines in record time is an extraordinary scientific achievement made possible by unprecedented public and private R&D investments.

In the coming years, research and innovation will be crucial to steer Europe's recovery, preparedness and resilience, accelerate the twin green and digital transitions, and support the EU's aspirations of open strategic autonomy. To do

this, for instance, the Union should raise its ambitions on the ongoing relaunch of the European Research Area, design a stronger innovation policy framework for the new decade, and conceive an enhanced Europe-proof public and private funding approach for R&D.

Behind all of this, an open dialogue between science, technology and society will be crucial to promote a more dedicated and proactive citizens' engagement in R&I activities, so that Europeans will continue to share scientific values and recognise the contribution of science and technology to progress and to their daily lives.

Therefore, we call on the Conference on the Future of Europe to discuss and deepen Research & Innovation issues over the months to come, so as to place R&I at the core of the debate on the EU's future challenges and priorities.

For centuries, Europe has been the home of global scientific and technological progress: today more than ever, Europeans should play an active role to make Research & Innovation the foundation for building the Europe of the future.

