



KEY RESULTS OF THE PLENARY TABLE

“BOOSTING FRONTIER RESEARCH: EUROPE’S NEXT MOVE”

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Europe stands at a pivotal crossroads in its pursuit of innovation and technological leadership. Recent economic reports have highlighted a widening GDP gap between the European Union and the United States, attributed to slower productivity growth and a lag in future technologies. Given that only four out of the top 50 innovative companies are European, there is an urgent need to address these challenges. While immediate pressing issues dominate headlines, investing in frontier research is essential for long-term prosperity and addressing global challenges.

Frontier research (pushing the boundaries of knowledge through curiosity-driven exploration) is crucial for stimulating economic growth and finding solutions to complex problems. As the EU prepares its next long-term budget, with a commitment to placing research and innovation at the heart of the economy, support from Member States will be critical to bridge the innovation gap with the US and China.

THE EXPERT PANEL ARTICULATES THE FOLLOWING CALLS TO ACTION:

Increase investment in frontier research.

1 — View investment in research and higher education not as a cost but as a strategic investment in the future. Sustained funding for fundamental science will prepare Europe to tackle environmental challenges, population growth, and technological advancements, ensuring long-term prosperity.

Foster European collaboration and integration.

2 — Overcome fragmentation and national silos by moving from voluntary collaboration to structural integration in European science and research. Initiatives like European-wide research networks and standardised frameworks can facilitate cooperation, leading to breakthroughs in areas such as quantum computing and artificial intelligence.

Simplify and harmonise regulations.

3 — Streamline and harmonise regulations across Member States to enable industries to scale up technologies efficiently, create value for citizens at lower costs, and enhance Europe’s competitiveness on the global stage. Complex and varied regulations hinder industrial development and innovation.

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Promote science to combat populism and misinformation.

4 — Make scientific research attractive, understandable, and trustworthy. Especially given uncertainties and scepticism towards science, it is essential to engage the public through education, social media, and accessible communication to build trust in science, counteract misinformation, and encourage societal support for scientific endeavours.

Support young scientists and encourage a risk-taking culture.

5 — Nurture talent and foster a culture that embraces risk-taking. Providing better support for early-career researchers and creating an ecosystem that values long-term, high-risk investments will empower the next generation of scientists to push boundaries and drive breakthroughs.

This event is supported by the European Research Council and assembled in the framework of the Falling Walls Science Summit 2024 in Berlin. The Falling Walls Science Summit is a leading international, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral forum for scientific breakthroughs. It commemorates the fall of the Berlin Wall and aims to promote dialogue between science and society.

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