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**Improving plans for the 10th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation: strengthening excellence, creating reliable framework conditions, securing collaborative research**

The European Union is currently setting the course for the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10) from 2028 onwards. The German Research Foundation (DFG), the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and the Leibniz Association welcome the EU Commission's decision to maintain a standalone programme of research and innovation funding. However, they call on the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament to improve this programme, which is of central importance to the European Research Area. In the further legislative process, a strong focus should be placed on improving its connection with the new European Competitiveness Fund. FP10 must stand for excellent science, reliable funding programmes and strong collaborative research.

With FP10, the EU is setting out the research and innovation guidelines for its corresponding funding programmes until 2034 and is planning a total budget of around €175 billion for this purpose. The upcoming decisions on the funding's scope, focus and set of regulations will have a decisive influence on Germany's attractiveness as a research location. In a joint expert opinion, the DFG, HRK and the Leibniz Association therefore identify the challenges and gaps in the plans currently under discussion and point out solutions for a sustainable strengthening of European research.

Professor Katja Becker, President of the DFG, says: "If Europe wants to succeed in the global competition for the best researchers and the best research, it is vital to again place scientific excellence unequivocally at the heart of FP10. With the European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the EU has instruments that enjoy high international regard, promote outstanding research and support scholars in early phases of their career – but they are chronically oversubscribed and structurally underfunded. We therefore need significantly higher funding that can be reliably predicted, as well as an adjustment of the grants to real cost structures and a clear rejection of any political logic in project selection. Excellent research requires independence, a willingness to take risks and science-led procedures."

Professor Walter Rosenthal, President of the HRK, says: "From basic research to market-orientated development, we need customized and also effectively and efficiently interlinked funding models. It is therefore vital to coordinate and fund the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, the Competitiveness Fund and

accompanying measures in such a way that they offer reliable funding conditions for innovative research at universities and research institutions. This should include appropriate and long-term funding, transparent application and selection procedures, and smart project funding management. All of this needs to be kept as unbureaucratic as possible so that researchers can focus on their work."

Professor Martina Brockmeier, President of the Leibniz Association, says: "Collaborative research in the second pillar of the Framework Programme is the real backbone of the European Research Area, which sees universities, non-university institutions and companies work together across national borders. For the future it remains important that funding isn't restricted to short-term economic benefit. Rather, it must cover the entire spectrum from early, exploratory research to application-oriented projects in a broad, open and competitive manner – with competitively awarded funding that also opens up opportunities for smaller consortia. The social sciences and humanities must be systematically included in this process."

Joint statement by the DFG, HRK and Leibniz Association

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