

Research & Innovation must be central in the “new normal”

This is a decisive time for Portugal, through its government, to define its future and play a stronger role in shaping Europe's future. To do so, the Portuguese government must have a strong and visionary position on research and innovation. We hereby, scientists and entrepreneurs, speak with one voice.

In the coming months, the Economic and Social Recovery Plan (2020-2030) will be defined in Portugal. At the same time, in Europe, the research and innovation budget for the next framework program (Horizon Europe 2021-2027) will also be defined. The guidelines and financial amount of both these programs will determine our collective future.

Our country's response to the recent pandemic has revealed to us how science and innovation feed the best decisions - in health, in industry, in companies - for our society as a whole. The investment in science and innovation in the last 30 years has allowed for a mobilization never seen before. In record time, huge adaptations and changes were introduced both in the production of scientific knowledge, diagnostics and essential equipment to fight the pandemic, but also in the mobilization of highly trained human resources, and even in the business models themselves. Never has it become so clear to society, the need to place research and innovation, as well as the institutions that carry out these actions, such as Research Institutes, Higher Education Institutions and Companies, at the centre of our activities. The role of scientists, and decisions based on scientific evidence, is now fundamental to our current daily lives.

This new look at science and its current central role in society reinforces our belief that only with a strong investment in research and innovation, and in the institutions that produce them, will it be possible to respond to the unknown challenges that lie ahead. Research has made an essential contribution to the creation and dissemination of scientific knowledge indispensable to innovation. More than 80% of the drugs we use to treat current diseases (hypertension, cancer, cholesterol) were identified from fundamental research projects¹. It is estimated that each € 1 invested in research and development programs in Europe has a return of € 13 in the business sector². Even more visible are how previous investments in science in Portugal are currently paying dividends in terms of innovation. Recently, our country was recognised as a “Strong Innovator” country in the European Innovation Scoreboard 2020 Report just published by the European Commission³. Therefore, we believe we should not allow the new framework program for research and innovation to have a budget that jeopardizes everything we have built-in recent years.

Europe's competitiveness must be strengthened and amplified. We are talking about the production of new ideas and new approaches to the challenges of the future, whether it be in health, climate change, education, energy, the organization of urban life, or in digitization and automation processes. This is the time to call for increased investment in research and innovation, to pave the way for our future. Only in this environment can we expect European companies to remain competitive in a global world, and, for Europe to assert itself as a leader forging the future we collectively dream of: sustainable, inclusive and prosperous.

It is, therefore, crucial to increase the installed capacity in research and innovation, and the coordination and interaction of the various sectors of society. It is essential not only to react to the unknown challenges that arise in different areas but above all, to prepare ourselves in advance for future challenges. To this end, the subscribers to this *manifesto* appeal to the following lines of action

¹ Spector et al 2018, DOI: [10.1126/scitranslmed.aag1787](https://doi.org/10.1126/scitranslmed.aag1787)

² https://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/speech_pascal-lamy_03072017.pdf

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/41941>

that should be expanded by the Economic and Social Recovery Plan (2020-2030), and by reinforcing the budget of Horizon Europe (2021-2027):

a) **A vision for the future.** Only excellent fundamental, discover-driven research, which deals with the unpredictable and uncovers the unknown, will allow us to create knowledge and tools to face the future unknown challenges to imprint our future aspirations and needs.

b) **Cooperation.** Joint public and private investment in research and innovation along the value chain and its integration into society and the national economy is required so that we better anticipate and respond to global crises. Moreover, a clear strategy for permanent coordination with national and international institutions is also needed. This cooperation entails:

i) Greater long-term investment in excellent human resources, ecosystems and technological infrastructures of fundamental, translational and cutting-edge science and innovation, in universities, technical universities (*Politecnico* in Portuguese), research institutes and companies.

ii) Greater investment in linking national and international industry to the research and innovation ecosystem through a strategy that includes joint collaborative projects that promote trust and long-term relationships between the different sectors, and respond to the society's needs and challenges with new products and services.

iii) Greater connection and coordination between national and international institutions to anticipate scenarios coordinating and improving joint responses to global challenges.

c) **Budgetary reinforcement.** Europe has all the potential to lead global research and innovation and to be a model for economic and social development. Portugal has the critical mass and the necessary infrastructure to be a major player in this transformation.

i) The Horizon Europe budget must be strengthened so that Europe can assert itself as a world leader in research and innovation. The ideal investment value threshold to achieve this objective is € 150bn as defined by Pascal Lamy in his economic study⁴. Portugal and its European Member State partners must support the investment for a strong research and innovation panorama, either through the multiannual financial framework and through the Economic and Social Recovery Plan (Next Generation EU).

ii) The European budget should synergize - not replace - nationally based investment in research and innovation. European cooperation enables faster scientific discoveries and the creation of value chains that can help all Member States to respond to the challenges of the future. However, the investment of each of its member states remains crucial to the potential for Europe's research and innovation to be fully achieved. Portugal must be visionary, and by having strengthened its investment in research and innovation during the crisis, it should thus increase, its competitiveness and employment in the short and long term. Thus, Portugal must have a concrete plan to reach its goal for investment in research and innovation of 3% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2030⁵. The bet on science and innovation, and on the human resources and institutions that belong to them, must go beyond the plan of intentions and irregular priority. We do believe it must be based on a well-defined and long-term strategy, evident to all and beyond the political cycles.

We believe this is a decisive time. A time of fast changes that challenge intelligence and the quick adaptation of the society and the general *status quo*. A world in transition that needs concrete actions, courage and knowledge. The course of history will depend on a bet on research and innovation, by visionary leaders in Portugal and Europe.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/speech_pascal-lamy_03072017.pdf

⁵ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/630284/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)630284_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/630284/EPRS_BRI(2018)630284_EN.pdf) e <https://expresso.pt/politica/2019-09-11-Antonio-Costa-promete-investimento-de-2-do-PIB-na-cultura-e-de-3-na-ciencia-ate-2030>

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