

INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURES

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The [universities of science and technology](#) united within [CESAER](#) cooperate intensely with research organisations and companies and (co-) operate numerous `Innovation Infrastructures` (i.e. test and demonstration facilities, testbeds, European innovation hubs, etc.) to boost innovation (co-) located at our universities and with our involvement. With this statement, we contribute to the ongoing debate on Innovation Infrastructures and how to support them through European, national and regional funding programmes, including the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the 9th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP9).

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURES

Although Research Infrastructures and Innovation Infrastructures superficially might appear different things, the same physical resource often can be used for different purposes depending on the needs of the user. Researchers use Innovation Infrastructures for executing excellent research, and companies use Research Infrastructures for the testing and demonstration of, for example, services, products and instrument technologies. Innovation Infrastructures thus can also belong organisationally to, or be sited in, universities allowing for close cooperation with companies and Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs).

POTENTIAL OF INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURES AND RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

Innovation Infrastructures have the highest added value when effectively involving partnerships between universities, RTOs, business, industry, public services and society at large. Access to Innovation Infrastructures and cooperation with partners is crucial to secure an effective and open innovation ecosystem. We thus underline the broader benefit of Research Infrastructures and their innovation potential, and the potential of Innovation Infrastructures to host researchers that execute fundamental and utility-driven research.

CRUCIAL ROLE IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Innovation Infrastructures are crucial in terms of education and training, and for the development of the relevant qualifications of researchers, developers, engineers, maintenance staff and managers. This role can be established and secured to the benefit of quality in education and impact of Innovation Infrastructures, by closely involving universities in their development and operation.

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IMPORTANT PRECONDITIONS

It is important that investments in Innovation Infrastructures neither distort internal markets nor compensate for the lack of investments by business and industry, i.e. act as state aid at the expense of start-ups and Research Infrastructures. Other important preconditions to be safeguarded concern compliance with regular intellectual property rights and ethical regimes. In this respect, we particularly point out the valuable work carried out in the establishment of the [European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures](#) and we underline that access to Innovation Infrastructures should comply with this document.

In order to provide a fertile ground for an innovation-driven ecosystem of high-tech and high value-added industries and businesses, it is imperative for governments to adjust their pension and social security regulations, tax rules, regulations on staff options in start-ups, ease of access to capital and provide support to incubators etc. It is not only about finding new solutions and inventions, but also about creating value on markets and here universities play an important role. There are few marketplaces other than a university where people from all over the world representing different disciplines meet to find solutions to global challenges. It is thus important to continue to safeguard and strengthen the universities' position in both Research and Innovation Infrastructures rather than limiting it.

ORGANISATION AND FUNDING

Good dialogue and bottom-up collaboration between universities, RTOs, business, industry and local and regional governments are needed in order to find the best suitable organisational and financial arrangements for Innovation Infrastructures. Future funding schemes for Innovation Infrastructures must not lead to competition between universities and RTOs, but inspire partnerships and alliances to secure open innovation with complementary competences and roles. Funding for Innovation Infrastructures should be provided for activities - such as access to Innovation Infrastructures - and costing sorts, but not into building them. It is crucial to assure alignment and complementarity of EU funding instruments, notably FP9 and ESIF. Funding for education and training must not be forgotten and left to university funds as universities have a different role from RTOs, particularly in educating and training (young) talent - including vocational.

FOLLOW UP

The [universities of science and technology](#) united within [CESAER](#) offer their expertise and best practice for the further development of Research and Innovation Infrastructures and corresponding funding instruments under the next European Union budget.

For more information and enquiries, please contact our [Vice President for Innovation & Impact](#), the [Chair of our Task Force Innovation](#) or our senior [Advisor for Research & Innovation](#).

[CESAER](#) is the European association of leading specialised and comprehensive universities of science and technology that: champion excellence in higher education, training, research and innovation; influence debate; contribute to the realisation of open knowledge societies; and, deliver significant scientific, social, economic, and societal impact.