

## EERA statement on European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's 2024-2029 Political Guidelines

On 18 July 2024, Ursula von der Leyen was confirmed as President of the European Commission for another five-year term after presenting her [2024-2029 Political Guidelines](#) to the newly elected Members of the European Parliament. The European Energy Research Alliance (EERA), the largest low-carbon energy research community in Europe and beyond, comprising over 250 leading organisations from more than 30 countries, welcomes this programmatic document, which places a strong emphasis on **putting research and innovation (R&I) at the heart of the EU's economy, boosting competitiveness, achieving the clean energy transition, and advancing the implementation of the European Green Deal.**

As extreme climatic events become more frequent globally, biodiversity loss and pollution worsen, and geopolitical tensions show no sign of easing, building a **resilient net-zero carbon emissions society by 2050 through a strategic autonomy approach** must remain a key priority for Europe. In this context, EERA is pleased to note that a central aspect of the European Commission President's agenda is the establishment of a **new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness, where achieving climate neutrality and developing the necessary technologies to attain this goal are identified as major challenges** for the coming decades, with **rightful emphasis on the crucial R&I** in this endeavour. Such recognition is indeed of capital importance in a context in which, as recently underlined by the International Energy Agency, around 35% of the CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions needed by 2050 are expected to come from technologies still under development<sup>1</sup>. EERA also warmly welcomes the document's acknowledgement of the **role played by Europe's world-class researchers and universities as significant assets in securing the European Union's competitive edge**, although we believe **their role extends far beyond this**, as they should be considered the inherent engine driving progress and innovation throughout the whole of European society.

Analysing the specifics of the document further, Ursula von der Leyen proposes launching a "**Clean Industrial Deal**" within the first 100 days of her mandate. This package aims to *"support and create the right conditions for companies"* to achieve the EU's carbon emissions reduction goals and includes an **Industrial Decarbonisation Accelerator Act**, designed to lower energy bills, enhance the integration of the Energy Union, and scale up investment in clean energy infrastructure and technologies. While EERA enthusiastically supports this plan, we regret that the guidelines seem to adopt a rather **narrow perspective on the clean energy transition**, lacking a more holistic approach that incorporates the **energy efficiency first principle** as well as essential elements of **fairness and sustainability**. We advise therefore **drawing a much-needed connection between this initiative and the social dimension of the Political Guidelines** to ensure it is genuinely people-centred and ultimately successful.

The document also outlines an **ambitious Research and Innovation strategy** that calls for **increased spending and a stronger focus on strategic priorities, groundbreaking fundamental research, disruptive innovation, and**

---

<sup>1</sup> Net Zero Roadmap: A Global Pathway to Keep the 1.5 °C Goal in Reach – 2023 Update: <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-roadmap-a-global-pathway-to-keep-the-15-0c-goal-in-reach>



**scientific excellence.** EERA celebrates this initiative, which completely aligns with the recommendations put forward in our recent position paper on the [future of Framework Programme 10](#). Implementing such a strategy would indeed mark a **significant step towards fully harnessing the potential of the sector** and concretely realising the recommendations outlined in recent key EU strategic reports, including **former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta's vision for the future of the single market<sup>2</sup>**, where he advocated for a **fifth freedom encompassing R&I, education, knowledge, and data.**

In this context, EERA supports the proposed measures to **unlock private capital, maximise the impact of public procurement, and utilise Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs)**, which are particularly suited to near-market technologies. However, to ensure their impact, it is **crucial for the R&I strategy to be underpinned by a clear and stable mechanism that supports both basic and cutting-edge applied research, fosters the emergence of new ideas and concepts, and provides an integrated approach for the development, maturation, and dissemination of critical and strategic technologies.** In this respect, it will be essential to provide a **comprehensive strategy to enhance the funding of key instruments for advancing groundbreaking, fundamental, and disruptive research**, such as the European Research Council (ERC) and the European Innovation Council (EIC), as well as for **collaborative research with industry through public-private partnerships.** These considerations are particularly urgent given the **European Council's proposed €450.49 million reduction to the EU's R&I 2025 budget**, a development that raises concerns for the EERA community. We will continue to monitor this situation closely, as **insufficient funding could undermine the European Commission's goals of boosting competitiveness and driving decarbonisation.**

In conclusion, the European Commission's Political Guidelines for 2024-2029 provide a **robust framework for enhancing the EU's competitiveness and securing its prosperity while maintaining the trajectory towards carbon neutrality and recognising the crucial role of research and innovation (R&I) in achieving these interconnected objectives.** The initiatives outlined offer significant opportunities for progress over the next five years, provided that future measures are implemented with appropriate checks and balances and supported by a stable, fair, and inclusive budget. The extent to which the re-elected President honours the commitments set out in her Guidelines will be closely monitored, particularly during the discussions that will follow the recent release of former Italian Prime Minister **Mario Draghi's report on the future of European competitiveness<sup>3</sup>**, as well as the forthcoming publications of the **expert group's position on the interim evaluation of Framework Programme 9 (FP9 – Horizon Europe) and the future Framework Programme 10 (FP10)**, and the EU's stance in the COP29 negotiations.

With this in mind, EERA looks forward to **collaborating with and advising European institutions on the complex landscape of low-carbon energy R&I** in the forthcoming institutional term, which will be crucial in paving the way towards achieving the EU's ambitious targets. EERA remains committed to ensuring that these efforts are underpinned by **scientific excellence** and a **genuine commitment to a fair and inclusive clean energy transition** for all European citizens.

---

<sup>2</sup> **Much more than a market – Speed, Security, Solidarity.** Empowering the Single Market to deliver a sustainable future and prosperity for all EU Citizens: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> **The future of European Competitiveness:** [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961\\_en?filename=The%20future%20of%20European%20competitiveness%20\\_%20A%20competitiveness%20strategy%20for%20Europe.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/97e481fd-2dc3-412d-be4c-f152a8232961_en?filename=The%20future%20of%20European%20competitiveness%20_%20A%20competitiveness%20strategy%20for%20Europe.pdf)