EU R&I and Health Policy to Tackle Global Challenges

European and global cooperation in research and innovation: case studies and lessons learned

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SUMMARY

Today's global challenges, such as climate change, health threats or biodiversity loss, are too complex for any single actor to solve alone. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential for mobilising collective knowledge, resources, and action across sectors and borders. They bring together global public and private actors to co-create solutions with global relevance.

The EU has a strong track record of research and innovation (R&I) partnerships through its Framework Programmes. However, the global and multi-stakeholder dimensions of these partnerships are not fully exploited. Preparations for the EU's 10th Framework Programme (FP10) provide an opportunity to reflect on the design, reach, and impact of R&I partnerships.

Based on a series of EU and global case studies, this report highlights the need for a more strategic, inclusive, and sustainable approach to collaboration on R&I. The selected case studies show that common enablers of impactful partnerships include clear alignment with strategic priorities and policy agendas. Such partnerships also feature multi-stakeholder representation, blended financing, local ownership, and responsiveness to crises. Common challenges include administrative complexity, fragmented funding, limited legal flexibility, and the under-representation of partners from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The report recommends ways to foster global, multi-stakeholder partnerships on R&I under FP10:

- Prioritise long-term, resilient partnerships, working on strategically relevant priorities for joint action.
- Promote broad, cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation, including with international donors, private actors, and local stakeholders.
- Adopt a flexible approach to the EU's role, acting as either a leader or partner depending on the context and capacity.
- Link R&I efforts with external instruments like the Global Gateway and Team Europe Initiatives.
- Ensure equity and local ownership, especially among LMICs.
- Simplify administrative processes and legal frameworks to remove barriers to global collaboration.
- Leverage the EU's science diplomacy and global networks.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Successfully addressing complex global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, global migration, biodiversity protection, the spread of disinformation and the surge in social inequality calls for collective and coordinated effort. No single government, institution, company, or stakeholder group can gather all the requisite research, financial and human resources to resolve these issues in isolation. In our increasingly interconnected world, joining forces is not just an opportunity, but a necessity.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships have emerged as essential vehicles for fostering collaborative solutions. They bring together partners from governments, academia, the private sector, and civil society, as well as philanthropic and international organisations. In doing so, they pool resources, align efforts, and co-create knowledge and innovations that address pressing societal needs.

Originally evolving from public-private partnerships in the 1990s, multi-stakeholder partnerships gained formal recognition through UN frameworks, such as the 1992 Earth Summit, the Millennium Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 ('Partnerships for the Goals') points to the pivotal role of partnerships in achieving global goals. The concepts and modus operandi of multi-stakeholder partnerships vary greatly along with their effectiveness in tackling global challenges, as illustrated by a rich body of research.

Within the domain of research and innovation (R&I), multi-stakeholder partnerships are now widely used as governance tools across sectors and regions. They take a variety of forms, from formal alliances and consortia to flexible coalitions, networks and platforms, supporting not only R&I but also diplomacy, policy alignment, and systemic change.

The EU formally introduced partnerships in the context of its European Research Area and in the 6th Framework Programme (FP6), in 2002. Over the course of its 20-plus years of existence, the EU's approach to R&I partnerships has evolved, first with FP7 (2007-2013) and then with Horizon 2020 (2014-2020), leading to a more streamlined approach under Horizon Europe (2021-2027). In the latter, the number of partnerships has been reduced by half and their types limited to three groups, namely co-funded, co-programmed and institutionalised partnerships (Articles 185 and 187). The idea has been to make partnerships more strategically aligned with EU policy priorities such as the Green Deal and digital transformation, consolidating their role as key instruments for mission-driven, inclusive, and impact-oriented innovation.

In parallel, the EU has shifted its approach to international partnerships in its external action through the launch of the Global Gateway Strategy in 2021 and Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs), which, by combining European resources and expertise, aim to

encourage inclusive and sustainable development. Several issues have been identified in implementing the Global Gateway, such as ensuring alignment with partners' needs, improving communication, and achieving genuinely coordinated prioritisation and strategic action. Even so, its development offers a significant, although still largely untapped, opportunity for EU global action, including in the area of R&I. The EU's engagement in global R&I partnerships, intensified by the Covid-19 crisis, adds a critical layer to its external action, reaffirming that multilateral, multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential.

Recent expert reports by Enrico Letta, Mario Draghi, and the Heitor group all highlight the need to pool the EU's R&I resources to effectively pursue shared goals. As advocated in recent CEPS reports (of January 2025 and July 2025), FP10 for R&I should be designed to strengthen Europe's role in tackling global challenges, which necessitates multi-stakeholder partnerships. The scale and worldwide nature of dilemmas like climate change, biodiversity loss, migration, and infectious diseases require strong leadership and involvement within and beyond Europe, to fully benefit from collective action.

This report presents a series of case studies to explore the strategic potential and practical difficulties of multi-stakeholder R&I partnerships. It examines diverse partnership models, both those initiated by the EU and those where the EU is a participant in global initiatives. The report reflects on the conditions needed to drive collective action and the value of shared governance in R&I initiatives for sustainable, equitable outcomes. Through these examples, it becomes evident that multi-stakeholder partnerships are not only mechanisms for resource sharing but also platforms for realising R&I potential for global public goods and boosting the EU's role in a multipolar world.

2. THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF EUROPEAN R&I PARTNERSHIPS

Horizon Europe has streamlined the structure of the European Partnership instrument, moving from 120 partnerships under its predecessor Horizon 2020 to 60 under Horizon Europe (as per the second Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027). As this rationalisation was mainly based on merging or discontinuing public-public partnerships, only 10 partnerships cover new thematic areas such as pandemic preparedness or virtual worlds. Partnerships aim to reduce research fragmentation, increase efficiency, and strengthen Europe's global leadership in R&I. They are expected to meet criteria such as coherence, additionality, and transparency, thus ensuring they provide clear added value over other EU funding instruments.

There are three different implementation modes for European Partnerships. First are institutionalised partnerships, requiring a high degree of integration, including:

- Joint Undertakings based on Article 187 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which are traditionally industry-led, with exceptions like the Global Health European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership 3 (EDCTP3), European High-Performance Computing, and Chips Joint Undertakings);
- Article 185 TFEU initiatives, which are long term public-public partnerships established on a voluntary basis by EU Member States ;
- The European Institute of Innovation and Technology's Knowledge and Innovation Communities (EIT KICs): Europe-wide innovation ecosystems that integrate education, research and entrepreneurship.

Second, co-programmed partnerships involve the joint programming of R&I activities and mobilisation of additional partner activities, based on a memorandum of understanding (generally with industry associations). Third, co-funded partnerships, based on grant agreements, are implemented by consortium members with 30% or 50% co-funding from Horizon Europe.

Institutionalised partnerships account for the largest share of the Horizon Europe budget for such efforts (58%), while co-programmed partnerships lead in committed contributions, particularly through in-kind support[1].

Figure 1. The European Partnership portfolio

[1] See European Commission (2024), *Performance of European partnerships – Biennial monitoring report 2024 on partnerships in Horizon Europe.*

Source: European Commission (2025), 'The European Partnership portfolio', February.

Strategic oversight and impact assessment of the European Partnerships are assured through the strategic coordinating process and features like the Biennial Monitoring Report and the Partnership Knowledge Hub. According to an Opinion of the Partnership Knowledge Hub, the strategic policy approach adopted in Horizon Europe partnerships has proven relevant and effective, as evidenced by a significant increase in financial commitments from Member States (EUR 15 billion) and the private sector (EUR 23 billion), as well as a strong average leverage factor of 2.83.

While the vital role of European Partnerships in FP10 is widely recognised, and EU partnerships have been central to the EU's FPs for over two decades, they face significant challenges in selection, governance, and implementation. Improvements are needed in evidence-based selection, as well as for an impact-driven partnership portfolio, stakeholder engagement, streamlined governance, flexible implementation, and clearer strategic alignment and intervention logics. There is also a need for simplified administrative rules, improved coordination, and synergies, as evidenced by dedicated position papers (e.g. the ERAC opinion on FP10 and EARTO's position paper).

European Partnerships differ in their approach to global cooperation[2] depending on factors like research type (basic research being more open to cooperation than applied research), sector, legal context, trust levels, and others. Most of the partnerships are distinctly European-centred initiatives and are internationalised outside the EU through

[2] See 'European Partnerships in Horizon Europe'.

networking and other soft measures. Yet globally-oriented partnerships require the involvement of international partners to achieve their objectives (e.g. the Innovation Health Initiative (IHI) and Water4All). Some focus on collaborations with regions of particular EU interest (e.g. the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) and Global Health EDCTP3). Others opt for fully integrating global actors into their activities (e.g. the Clean Energy Transition Partnership (CETP)) or involve joint calls or shared activities with international partners (e.g. the joint call of the Chips Joint Undertaking with the Republic of Korea in 2024).

Although recognising the progress made, external evaluations of the partnerships[3] and the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe (2025) have identified obstacles to engagement with global partners. Among them is the lack of a strategic approach and sufficient budget to engage effectively with international partners. There are also concerns about the competitiveness of European industry, geopolitical issues, and technological sovereignty. International participation is often limited by legal constraints, reciprocity conditions, uncertainty around eligibility, and varying levels of international budget allocation. There is furthermore a limited understanding of the European Partnership model outside Europe, making it difficult for global partners to commit, trust and engage effectively.

On average, 12% of the overall budget across the European Partnerships is planned for collaborations with non-EU partners (i.e. an increase from the 7% baseline of Horizon 2020). The Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking stands out with 100% of its overall budget for connections with non-EU actors; Cluster 1 'Health' generally leads on internationalisation among all Horizon Europe clusters.

In Horizon Europe, alongside reforms to the partnership landscape the EU has renewed its strategic focus on international R&I cooperation through the Global Approach to Research and Innovation. It emphasises a modular approach (balancing openness with strategic autonomy) and the EU's role in supporting multilateral R&I partnerships (ranging from informal networks to joint initiatives) to work on global challenges. A good example of a novel approach to R&I partnerships is the All-Atlantic Ocean Research & Innovation Alliance, which is not a formal European Partnership but rather a science diplomacy initiative supported via Horizon Europe projects such as OKEANO. Global R&I collaborations are therefore increasingly seen as tools of science diplomacy and components of EU strategic alliances with global partners, where closer alignment with EU external policies (such as the Global Gateway and TEIs) offers valuable inspiration for future FP10 partnerships.

[3] For example, see ERA-LEARN (2024), Guidance on international cooperation for European Partnerships.

3. CASE STUDIES ON INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The selection of partnership examples in this report has been guided by the objective of illustrating the diversity of models that characterise European and international multi-stakeholder R&I collaborations. To capture the structural and operational diversity of current European Partnerships under Horizon Europe, the report provides examples of institutionalised partnerships (such as Joint Undertakings or Article 185 initiatives) as well as a non-institutionalised partnership. Additionally, an example of a Team Europe Initiative has been selected, acknowledging TEIs' growing role in the EU's international partnership landscape and their potential to better integrate R&I dimensions. Beyond the purely European context, the spotlight is on internationally recognised multi-stakeholder partnerships, where the EU is a significant partner. All of these cases have been chosen for their demonstrable impact, inclusiveness, and ability, as well as their further potential to mobilise a wide range of actors and stakeholders.

The analysis has been supported by available information sources. Basic structural and contextual data (e.g. the partnership format, thematic focus, governance, and funding models) have been collected from the official websites of the partnerships. The insights into key achievements and lessons learned come primarily from interim evaluations conducted under Horizon Europe, as well as other publicly available evaluation reports and assessments of selected partnerships, both European and international.

The goal is not to carry out an in-depth evaluation, but rather to extract and synthesise relevant findings from existing assessments to identify cross-cutting patterns and lessons learned, particularly in relation to governance, stakeholder inclusion, sustainability, and the integration of R&I into broader policy objectives. These insights are aimed at informing ongoing reflections on how the EU can play a more active and strategic role in shaping, leading, and participating in effective, impact-driven R&I partnerships in Europe and globally, including through FP10.

3.1. EXAMPLES OF EUROPEAN R&I MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

3.1.1. Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area

PRIMA is a joint R&I initiative between the EU and Mediterranean states aimed at strengthening R&I capacities in the Mediterranean area and developing innovative solutions to critical regional issues, such as water management, agriculture, and food systems. Launched in 2017 under Article 185, the 10-year initiative seeks to facilitate international cooperation, currently enabling 20 participating countries to contribute to and benefit from the cross-border projects supported by the initiative. PRIMA is jointly financed by participating states and the European Commission, operating through three segments of project financing, each differing in their administration and origin of funding.

Starting from 2017, the total contribution of the EU – facilitated through Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe – is expected to reach EUR 325 million by 2031. The participating states' contribution for the same period will be up to EUR 384 million.

Figure 2. PRIMA – operational objectives per thematic area

Source: PRIMA *KPI Handbook for the participants*, PRIMA Specific Impact Pathway, April 2025.

Since its launch, PRIMA has made substantial contributions to regional R&I capabilities, particularly in Southern Mediterranean countries. By 2023, the partnership had helped fund 237 R&I projects in the region, and although a majority of these are yet to be completed[4], PRIMA's mid-term review report promises progress. As the main EU initiative in the region seeking to address key R&I challenges, the programme serves as a cornerstone of research collaboration in the Mediterranean, fostering scientific integration across participating states, boosting EU-South cooperation, and advancing the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus approach. PRIMA is also touted as a successful tool of science diplomacy, helping build mutual trust and strengthening the EU's geopolitical influence in a region of strategic importance to the European Green Deal.

[4] See PRIMA's *Annual Work Plan 2023*.

While the added value of the PRIMA initiative is considered high, and expected to be even higher in the future, the partnership has also been questioned over its complex administrative procedures and inclusivity (i.e. PRIMA Interim evaluation). Indeed, it has been noted that it is challenging to manage the varying processes for funding in 20 countries and that streamlining these processes could reduce grant approval times. Another concern is the dominance of EU members in technological innovation. Participants from non-EU states make up less than 40% of section 1 and 2 grant recipients, with Italy and Spain ranking first among the beneficiaries.

3.1.2. Clean Energy Transition Partnership

The Clean Energy Transition Partnership (CETP) is a multilateral initiative bringing together public and private R&I actors from European and non-European countries to accelerate the clean energy transition. The partnership is designed to encourage a coherent, unified approach to developing and implementing clean energy technologies. It aims to better connect Europe's fragmented R&I landscape by aligning priorities, pooling resources, and fostering transnational innovation ecosystems.

Launched in 2022 and scheduled to run until 2028, the partnership has 65 R&I programme owners or managers from 31 countries covering ministries, regions, cities, companies, non-profit organisations, etc. It builds on the previous work of nine climate and energy-related European Research Area Networks and Joint Programme Initiatives. Funding for the CETP comes from national and regional resources as well as from the EU through Horizon Europe. The total estimated budget of the partnership is EUR 791.2 million, with EUR 210 million coming from the EU and the rest originating from CETP partner countries. The total estimated budget of the partnership is EUR 791.2 million, with EUR 210 million coming from the EU and the rest originating from CETP partner countries[5].

While the CETP's first call for funding only resulted in investment in 47 R&I projects, the second call drew double the number of pre-proposals, funding a total of 62 projects. Since the CETP's first call for R&I projects was launched in 2022, and the first selected proposals began their work as late as Q3 2023, only limited material has been available for the evaluation of these projects. However, at a minimum, the CETP's mobilisation of private, national, and regional funds to streamline a unified investment strategy has provided Europe with an overarching, collaborative platform that tackles fragmentation in climate-related R&I spending. It has helped to establish a shared agenda and vision for the clean energy transition and encouraged a unified response to global energy challenges. In doing

[5] See European Commission (2024), *Performance of European partnerships – Biennial monitoring report 2024 on partnerships in Horizon Europe*.

so, it has created a more integrated European innovation ecosystem and aligned the R&I landscape with the objectives of the European Green Deal[6]. Moreover, as one of the EU's co-funded partnerships under Horizon Europe, the CETP serves as a good example of complementary funding.

The partnership has also facilitated knowledge sharing through its Knowledge Community and Impact Network, the aim of which is to provide policymakers with a stronger evidence base and encourage the upscaling of new technologies. The Transition Initiatives are the key acting bodies of the CETP, which coordinate stakeholder engagement, develop thematic modules for annual calls, and implement activities on knowledge management and impact.

Figure 3. Overview of CETP Transition Initiatives

Source: 'About us', CETPartnership.

One of the main challenges currently faced by the partnership is internal coherence[7]. As outlined above, the CETP is based on nine predecessor initiatives, all of which focus on different aspects of the green energy transition. The range of focus areas of these previous initiatives is reflected in the division of the CETP into seven Transition Initiatives. These function largely in isolation from each other, resulting in limited collaboration and interaction. The lack of integration between Transition Initiatives also impacts the call process, as it is currently divided into different modules. This structure risks overlooking

[6] See the European Commission's 2024 *Partnership Evaluation Report*.

[7] Ibid.

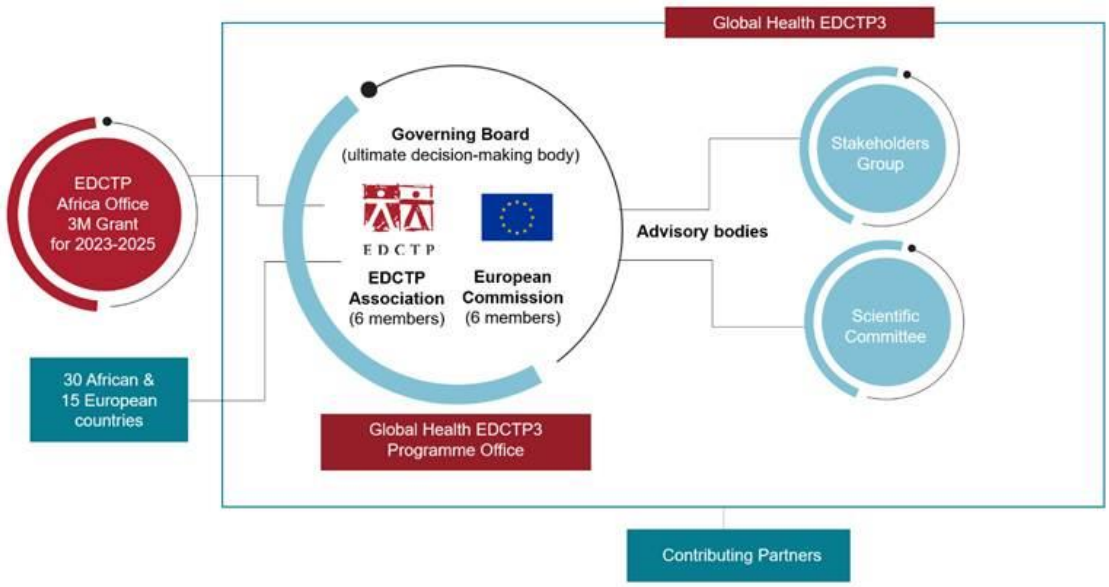
potential areas for cooperation between them and overcomplicating the call process, thereby discouraging researchers from submitting their proposals.

3.1.3. Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking

The Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking is an institutionalised public-private partnership established under Article 187 for the 2021-2027 period, with operations continuing until 2031. Building on the achievements of EDCTP2 in tackling infectious diseases in sub-Saharan Africa, Global Health EDCTP3 aims to advance late-stage clinical research on poverty-related and neglected diseases, while expanding its scope to include emerging infectious threats, antimicrobial resistance, and health problems linked to climate change. It also seeks to strengthen research capacity, infrastructure, and health emergency preparedness in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is funded through a mixed mechanism, with EUR 910 million from the EU plus EUR 950 million from the EDCTP Association and other contributing partners. Global Health EDCPT3 attracts contributions from global funders, such as the Gates Foundation and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), which demonstrates its relevance. Currently, the partnership includes 15 EU and 30 African countries, working in close collaboration with major global health stakeholders such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Africa Centres for Disease Control, Gavi, USAID, and the Global Fund. Its governance structure ensures strategic oversight and inclusive engagement, consisting of a governing board, a scientific committee, and a stakeholder forum, supported by the EDCTP Africa Office for enhanced regional involvement.

Figure 4. Global Health EDCPT3 – governance structure



Source: 'Our governance', Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking.

Among its notable achievements is the development of the world's second malaria vaccine (R21), endorsed by the WHO in 2023, with 77% efficacy in children and a projected impact of saving over 4 million lives by 2040[8]. It has also supported new treatments for diseases such as cryptococcal meningitis and paediatric HIV, launched hundreds of clinical studies (371 under EDCTP2), and rapidly responded to outbreaks like Mpox in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It has established Networks of Excellence across 21 African countries and trained over 362 African fellows and 53 000 professionals through short-term programmes.

The 2024 evaluation support study and 2025 interim evaluation recognise EDCTP3 as a valuable multi-stakeholder partnership that promotes coherence and resource mobilisation through public-private collaboration. It stands out for its emphasis on inclusivity, transparency, and alignment with global health priorities. Moreover, it remains a unique example of synergies between Horizon Europe and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument–Global Europe programme, by contributing to the TEI on Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines (MAV+) for local pharmaceutical production in Africa.

However, the partnership faces hurdles, including legal limitations that restrict African institutions from coordinating projects, which has been viewed as a step back from EDCTP2's more inclusive model. Other concerns include the slower than expected expansion of European membership (which may be explained by the fact that researchers from EU Member States are able to participate in the programme irrespective of membership in the EDCTP Association). Engagement from non-European and non-African partners is low, SME involvement is limited, and under-resourcing and legal complexity result in delays. In addition, the narrow disease focus excludes broader global health issues and regions like Latin America. Finally, there is uncertainty around long-term financial sustainability and the future of projects beyond 2031. A 2024 phasing-out plan proposed that the EDCTP Association continue core activities, albeit with the recognition that sustained public investment remains essential due to limited commercial interest in the targeted diseases.

3.1.4. The MAV+ Team Europe Initiative

Launched in 2021 at the G20 Global Health Summit in Rome, TEI MAV+ is a flagship initiative under the EU's Global Gateway Strategy. It was established in direct response to the call by African leaders to produce 60% of vaccines on the continent by 2040. TEI MAV+ employs a '360 degree' approach to strengthening local manufacturing capacities and

[8] For more, see the 2025 Impact Global Health case study.

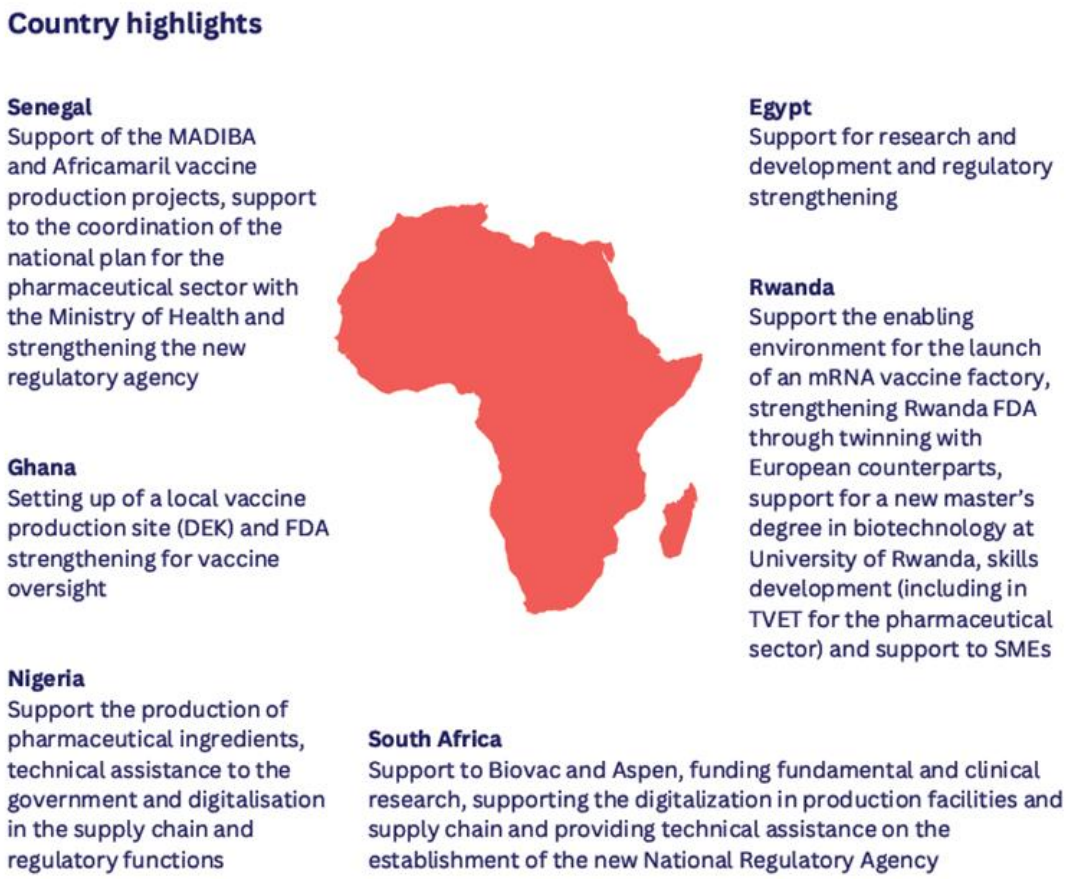
pharmaceutical systems in Africa. This spans the full R&I cycle, regulatory systems, and capacity-building frameworks.

With an expanded budget of EUR 1.9 billion (up from the initial EUR 1 billion), the funding includes EUR 590 million for Gavi in support of the African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator. The financing mechanism blends grants, loans, budget support, technical assistance, and twinning arrangements. TEI MAV+ is funded by the EU, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the European Investment Bank. Partners include African Union (AU) agencies (e.g. Africa Centres for Disease Control and AUDA-NEPAD) and bodies, with a number of additional contributors from Team Europe and international stakeholders[9]. Joint EU-African governance structures combine continental-level coordination with strong country-level engagement in Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa, ensuring local ownership. The initiative is coordinated by the Team Europe Support Structure (TESS MAV+), led by Enabel, Expertise France, and GIZ, providing technical and strategic guidance.

TEI MAV+ stands out for its multi-stakeholder nature, bringing together EU institutions, Member States, African governments, development banks, the AU, WHO, Gates Foundation, academia, civil society, and private sector (including biotech and pharmaceutical companies). Its continental impact includes funding and technical support for regulatory strengthening, capacity building, the African Medicines Agency, and the African Vaccines Manufacturing Accelerator. At the country level, production facilities are advancing across the six abovementioned African countries . R&I efforts are being supported through local pharmaceutical research in Nigeria, technology transfer partnerships in Ghana, development of Rwanda's first Biosciences Park, and pre-clinical vaccine research in South Africa. Notably, TEI MAV+ benefits from synergies with Horizon Europe, including support from the Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking.

[9] See the full list in the 2025 Factsheet.

Figure 5. TEI MAV+ country highlights



Source: MAV+ Factsheet – Overview, Capacity4dev.

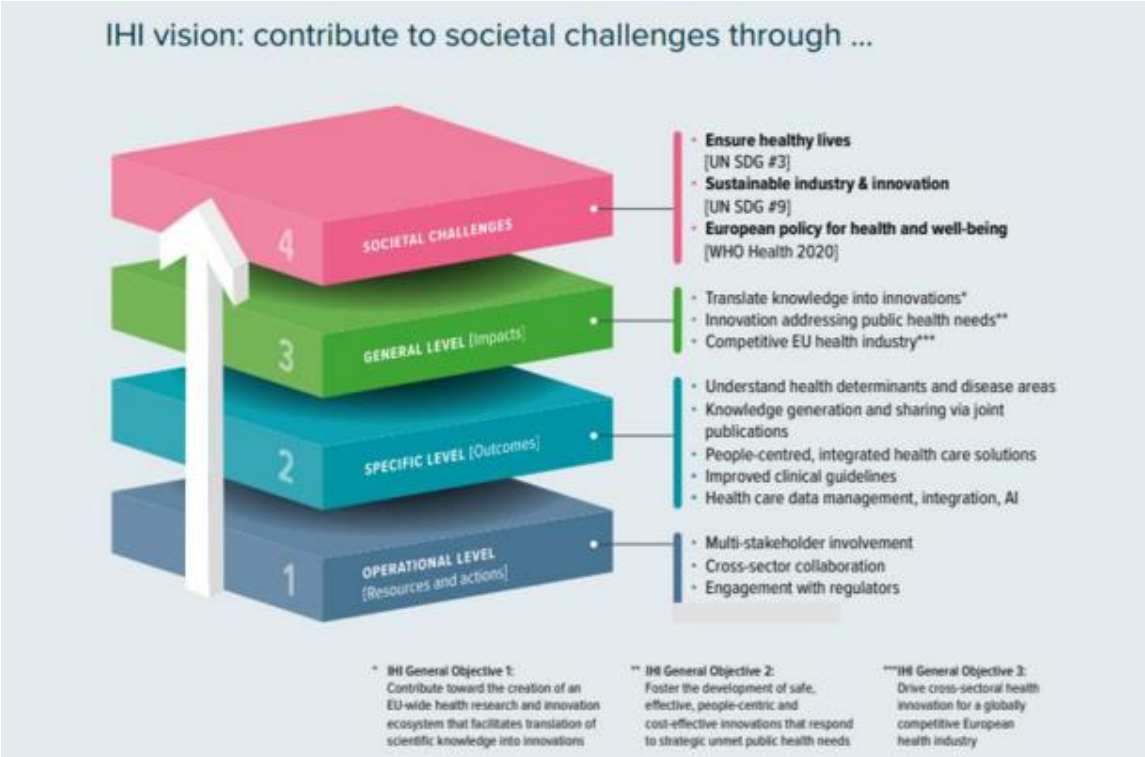
Although formal evaluations are pending, early assessment points to TEI MAV+ as a model of EU-AU cooperation with clear geopolitical significance. It demonstrates the value of a holistic approach and reinforced European coordination through TESS. The initiative's strength lies in its inclusive multi-stakeholder collaboration and maintaining open dialogue with civil society actors like Médecins Sans Frontières and the Global Health Forum, while welcoming private sector engagement.

However, challenges remain. Ensuring African co-ownership in both the design and implementation phases is crucial, as TEIs are often perceived as Brussels-led. Rwanda is a successful example of government leadership aligning the initiative with national priorities, and thus helping to attract private sector investment, but broader inclusion of African countries and non-state actors is still needed. TEI MAV+ is a promising and evolving model of R&I-driven global health cooperation, but its long-term success will require continued commitment, inclusive governance, broader engagement with African partners and non-state actors, and sustained monitoring.

3.1.5. Innovative Health Initiative

The IHI Joint Undertaking is a public-private partnership established under Article 187 between the EU and European life science industries, building on the legacy of the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI and IMI2) which began in 2005. Launched in 2021, IHI aims to translate R&I efforts into real-world applications that benefit patients, enhance societal health, and strengthen the EU's global competitiveness. Its total budget of EUR 2.4 billion is equally co-funded by the EU and industry partners including the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations, Vaccines Europe, MedTech Europe, COCIR, and EuropaBio. IHI supports projects guided by a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, overseen by a joint EU-industry governing board.

Figure 6. Innovative Health Initiative – vision



Source: IHI 2025 Amended Work Programme.

IHI has significantly broadened its scope beyond medicine development to include diagnostics, digital health, biotechnology, and medical technology, filling gaps identified in IMI2. As of mid-2025, IHI has launched 16 active projects, over 90% of which involve cross-sectoral collaborations across EU and global partners, bringing together participants from two or more technology sectors. Notably, IHI has introduced a patient pool to address prior gaps in engagement and fostered long-term structures such as EHDEN, EUPATI, and INNODIA.

The initiative also builds on IMI2's impactful legacy, including contributions to Covid-19 and Ebola responses (as seen in the IMI2 final evaluation). It continues to deliver tools and treatments for Alzheimer's, tuberculosis (UNITE4TB), RSV (RESCEU), and paediatric clinical trials. Though primarily EU-based, about 15% of IHI projects include non-EU partners, reflecting expanding international cooperation, although still constrained by legal and administrative barriers.

While IHI's full impact is yet to be assessed, as its first projects only began in October 2024, the interim evaluation affirms that IHI continues the effective public-private investment model of IMI2. It has improved inclusiveness through the Science and Innovation Panel and initiatives like the Ideas Incubator to widen stakeholder engagement. IHI has also exceeded its 20% target for SME participation, reaching 22% in the first 16 projects. Still, difficulties persist, including administrative and legal constraints on international partners and the need to further involve civil society and healthcare professionals in governance and project design.

Ensuring IHI's long-term sustainability beyond 2027 is essential, with recommendations to explore diversified funding sources, including philanthropic and regional partners, and to use the phasing-out strategy not only for a transition from Horizon Europe, but also to secure IHI's strategic future.

3.2. EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS ON R&I

3.2.1. Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

Gavi is a public-private partnership dedicated to improving children's access to vaccines in lower-income countries. Bringing together partners from international organisations, governments, industry, civil society, academia, and others, Gavi aims to lower the cost of immunisation and help protect the world from deadly or debilitating infectious diseases.

Founded in 2000 following an initiative by the Gates Foundation and other partners, Gavi is funded by a combination of governments, organisations, foundations, and private donors. The partnership also has a co-financing requirement whereby recipient countries are expected to increasingly share the cost of immunisation programmes as their economies grow, with the long-term objective of enabling them to eventually transition out of Gavi support. Excluding money raised for COVAX, an initiative co-led by Gavi to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, Gavi has received an estimated USD 30 billion in funding since its launch. Team Europe is Gavi's largest contributor, totalling more than EUR 6.5 billion between 2021 and 2025.

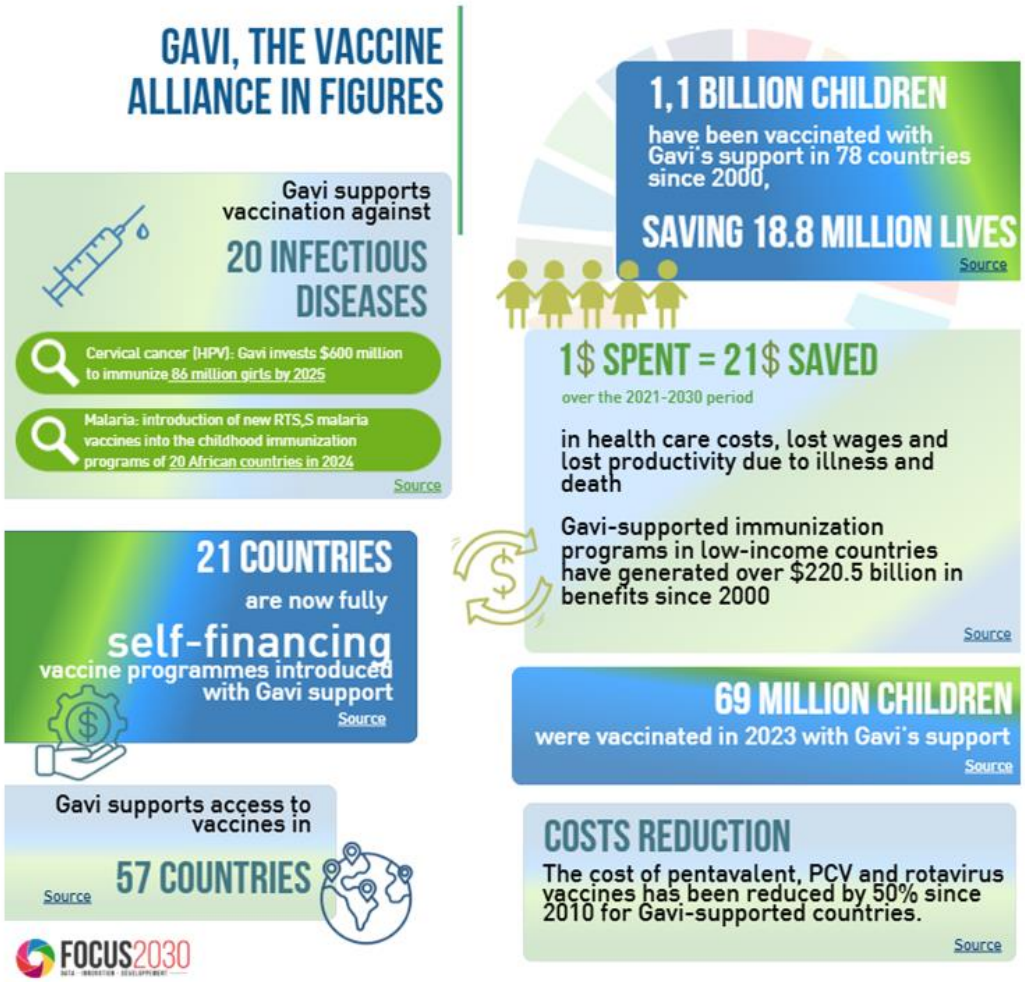
Gavi benefits greatly from its multi-stakeholder approach, collaborative governance model, and public-private partnerships. In addition to funding global immunisation

efforts, Gavi also helps encourage the development and deployment of novel vaccine solutions. Another strength of Gavi lies in the emphasis placed on empowering low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to take ownership of their immunisation programmes. By allocating an equal amount of board seats to recipient and donor countries and requiring recipient countries to co-finance immunisation programmes, Gavi enables implementation strategies to be tailored to local needs and encourages national agency.

As of 2023, Gavi had facilitated the vaccination of more than 1.1 billion children across 78 countries, thereby reportedly averting 18.8 million future deaths since its launch in 200010. The number of deaths prevented increases by 2.7 million when also accounting for the impact of COVAX. Gavi has also played a crucial role in preventing widespread outbreaks of diseases like Ebola and yellow fever by ensuring the availability of vaccine stockpiles. Additionally, Gavi reports that by supporting widespread immunisation, it has helped create more than USD 250 billion in economic benefits in lower-income countries. Further indicating the initiative's high return on investment, Gavi proclaims that every dollar spent on immunisation yields USD 54 in wider societal benefits.

[10] See the Gavi factsheet, October 2024.

Figure 7. Gavi in figures



Source: Replenishment of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance: Vaccinating half of the world's children.

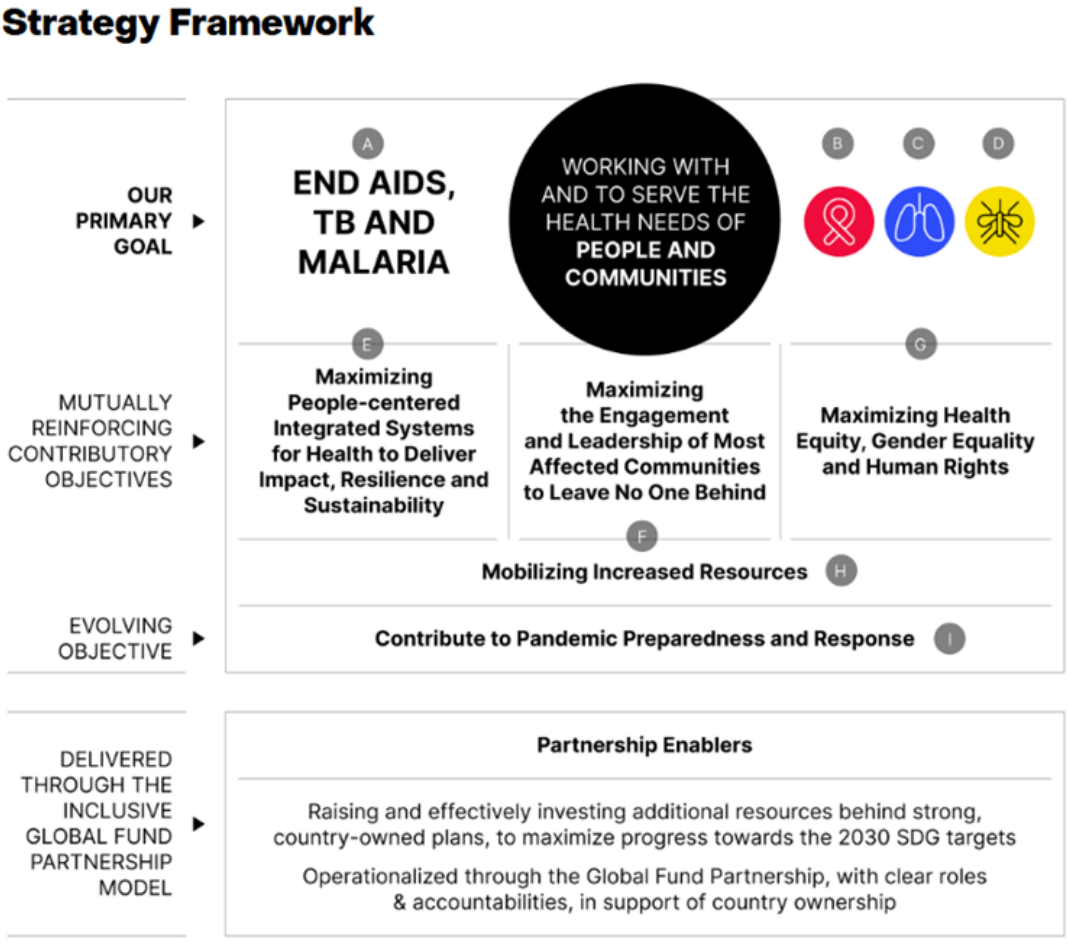
A mid-term evaluation of Gavi's 2021-2025 strategy acknowledges substantial achievements despite global disruptions, including the delivery of nearly 2 billion Covid-19 vaccine doses. However, concerns remain around the sustainability of transitions, with potential setbacks due to geopolitical and systemic problems. The positive results of Gavi's own evaluations are reflected in MOPAN's most recent assessment, which finds that Gavi remains fit for purpose overall and delivers value for money. It also identifies some areas for improvement in Gavi's operations, including the need for stronger safeguarding policies (especially on protection from sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and sexual harassment), simplification of its complex funding model, and clearer accountability structures. It also highlights gaps in evaluation tracking, limited integration of gender, climate change, and environmental concerns, and misalignment between secretariat staffing and country needs, calling for better definition of partner roles. The 2025 WHO

statement strongly endorses Gavi's ongoing role and calls for sustained funding to continue global immunisation efforts.

3.2.2. Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund) is a global public-private partnership that mobilises and invests resources to accelerate the end of the three major infectious diseases. Founded in 2002, following G8 summit discussions, the Global Fund operates across more than 100 countries and unites governments, civil society, the private sector, philanthropic organisations, technical partners, and communities affected by the diseases. Its primary focus is on ending the epidemics of HIV, TB, and malaria, while increasingly supporting universal health coverage (UHC), health systems strengthening, and responses to antimicrobial resistance and climate-related health threats.

Figure 8. The Global Fund's Strategy Framework



Source: The Global Fund's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

Financed largely through three-year replenishment cycles, the Fund has allocated over USD 65 billion since inception, with 94% of contributions coming from donor governments, notably the US, France, and the UK, while the European Commission ranks 7th and Team Europe collectively is a major contributor. The Fund is governed by a 28-member board and implements its work through Country Coordinating Mechanisms, ensuring multi-stakeholder input and local ownership. Different partners play varied roles: implementation (governments), technical assistance (multilaterals), funding and advocacy (private sector and donors). It has saved 65 million lives and driven a 61% reduction in deaths from AIDS, TB, and malaria. In 2024 alone, 25 million people were on anti-retroviral therapy and 7.1 million treated for TB, while over 220 million bed nets were distributed to combat malaria. Recent investment cycles, totalling USD 17.3 billion (2024–2026), also include funding for UHC and health systems strengthening while R&D efforts intend to scale up next-generation HIV/TB treatments and diagnostic tools.

The Global Fund's evaluations and reports highlight remarkable successes while candidly identifying continuing challenges in coverage, equity, and health systems resilience. The Global Fund's impact extends beyond disease control and its investments have generated USD 1.2 trillion in health gains and USD 400 billion in productivity benefits (2002-2023). It also plays a catalytic role in R&D adoption, incentivising market access to innovations. Despite these successes, ongoing issues include sustaining donor commitment, strengthening equity and coverage, and enhancing strategic private-sector partnerships. Evaluations highlight the importance of community engagement, evidence-based programming, and integrating responses across health threats. As it approaches its 8th replenishment cycle in 2028 amid a shifting landscape of global health funding (particularly from the US), the Global Fund remains a cornerstone of global health cooperation and innovation.

3.2.3. Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness

The Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (GloPID-R) is a multi-stakeholder international platform dedicated to coordinating research on new and emerging infectious diseases to improve global outbreak preparedness. Established in 2013, GloPID-R plays a central role in aligning research priorities during health crises and fostering collaborative responses to global health threats such as Ebola, Zika, and Covid-19. With 35 member organisations, including national research funders, academic institutions, and philanthropic foundations, and observer participation from prominent global health actors like the WHO, CEPI, and Gavi, GloPID-R stands out as a unique and vital alliance in global health research coordination.

Funded in part by the Horizon Europe programme, as well as contributions from bodies like the EDCTP, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and ZonMw, GloPID-R operates

through a central secretariat and an executive board, supporting both strategic and technical functions. The platform has developed several critical tools and initiatives to support pandemic research coordination, including COVID CIRCLE, Pandemic PACT, the Living Roadmap for Clinical Trial Coordination, and regional hubs like the Africa Hubs. One of its main contributions during the Covid-19 pandemic was the COVID-19 Research Project Tracker, which provided a real-time overview of global research efforts and funding flows.

Figure 9. Three goals and eleven accompanying principles of the GloPID-R Funders Living Roadmap for Clinical Trial Coordination

Source: Clinical Trial Focus, GloPID-R.

GloPID-R exemplifies the potential of EU-supported international partnerships in advancing global health preparedness through effective, coordinated R&I action[11]. Still, evaluations suggest that to maximise its impact, GloPID-R should enhance data sharing

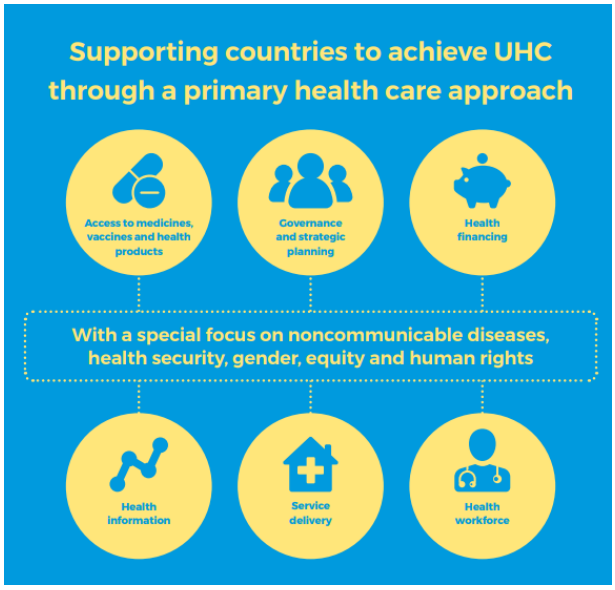
[11] See 'Stronger together: coordinated efforts against pandemics', Research and Innovation, European Commission.

on funding flows[12], increase member engagement[13], and expand the partnership to include social science expertise and stronger clinical trial networks in LMICs[14]. As a unique alliance of its kind globally, GloPID-R's model offers valuable lessons for the future development of EU-led R&I partnerships with a truly international and inclusive scope.

3.2.4. WHO Universal Health Coverage Partnership

The WHO's Universal Health Coverage Partnership (UHC Partnership) is one of the WHO's largest platforms for international cooperation on strengthening health systems to achieve universal health coverage and primary healthcare. Active since 2011, the UHC Partnership was launched following a World Health Assembly resolution and now operates in over 120 countries. It is primarily funded by multilateral donors, including the EU, Japan, the UK, France, Canada, and Germany. By 2023, the EU had contributed over EUR 200 million to the initiative, with a further EUR 125 million pledged for 2023-2027. Led by the WHO, the governance structure involves a Multi-donor Coordination Committee, a High-level Steering Committee, and Joint Working Teams to ensure operational coordination, leadership alignment, and adaptive planning through real-time monitoring and bi-monthly consultations.

Figure 10. UHC Partnership support structure



Source: WHO (2023), *Universal Health Coverage Partnership*, brochure, July.

[12] See 'Pandemics: international research coordination by GloPID-R'.

[13] See European Commission (2023), Evaluation Study of the European Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation for a Resilient Europe.

[14] See GloPID-R (2023), 'Lessons learnt about setting research priorities in LMICs during health crises: New GloPID-R report highlights best practices for funders'.

The UHC Partnership has made significant strides in building country-led policy dialogues tailored to national health priorities, deploying over 150 policy advisers worldwide. It has supported national strategies for strengthening health systems and addressing specific challenges, such as antimicrobial resistance, sexual and reproductive health rights, and for responding to public health emergencies like Ebola. Its use of realist research methodologies enables partners to evaluate health interventions in real-world contexts, fostering learning on what works, for whom, and under what circumstances. The initiative has enhanced ownership and coherence in health planning by aligning national and international actors.

Key lessons from the UHC Partnership highlight that achieving UHC requires not only technical expertise but also strong, sustained, multi-stakeholder collaboration across sectors and levels of governance. The UHC Partnership Annual Report 2023 calls for enhancing policy dialogue around health financing and planning, maintaining political commitment tied to SDG 3, and leveraging the WHO's global advisory network to promote cross-country innovation and mutual learning. Overall, the UHC Partnership illustrates the critical value of long-term, multisectoral partnerships in advancing equitable and resilient health systems globally.

3.3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The case studies presented in this report illustrate the transformative potential of R&I partnerships. They point to common success factors such as:

- clearly defined priority areas (e.g. the contributions of Global Health EDCPT3 and GloPID-R to scientific progress in health);
- clear alignment with EU and global priorities and strategies (e.g. CETP with the Green Deal and Global Health EDCTP3 with the EU Global Health Strategy as well as the AU-EU Innovation Agenda);
- strong multi-stakeholder governance and inclusive representation (e.g. Gavi and PRIMA);
- long-term financial commitment and blended funding models (e.g. IHI, TEI MAV+, and the Global Fund);
- capacity building and local ownership for ensuring regional relevance (e.g. TEI MAV+, the WHO UHC Partnership, and Global Health EDCTP3);
- flexibility and responsiveness to global crises (e.g. Global Health EDCTP3, GloPID-R, and Gavi).

The most recurrent **challenges** include:

- administrative complexity and fragmented funding streams, especially under European Partnerships (e.g. PRIMA, CETP, and IHI);
- limited coordination among internal units or parallel streams (e.g. CETP Transition Initiatives);
- legal barriers that reduce partner leadership, especially for LMICs (e.g. Global Health EDCTP3);
- under-representation of non-EU and non-state actors (e.g. PRIMA and TEI MAV+);
- limited engagement with local communities (GloPID-R and the Global Fund);
- lower than expected EU Member State engagement (Global Health EDCPT3);
- sustainability risk due to heavy reliance on public funding (e.g. the WHO UHC Partnership and Global Health EDCTP3).

In addition, recent CEPS analysis points to the following reasons for the (so far) limited impact of EU R&I funding on global challenges: complex funding instruments and financial rules, insufficient international collaboration under Horizon Europe, conflicting priorities (where competitiveness and global challenges are treated similarly despite differing goals) and weak integration with external partnerships like the Global Gateway. In order to make FP10 an engine of global development in advancing towards the achievement of Agenda 2030 and the Pact for the Future, the EU has to improve the design of globally participatory, multi-stakeholder R&I partnerships.

Table 1. Comparison of the key success factors and challenges of R&I partnerships

Dimension	Common success factors	Common challenges
Strategic focus	- Clearly defined thematic priorities - Alignment with EU and global strategies (e.g. Green Deal, EU Global Health Strategy, SDGs, AU-EU Innovation Agenda)	- Fragmented internal coordination and lack of coherence - Short-term, project-based or annual work plan approaches and lack of continuity
Governance & participation	- Multi-stakeholder governance models - Involvement of public, private, academic, and civil society actors	- Under-representation of LMICs and non-EU actors - Limited engagement with local communities

	- Institutionalised mechanisms for inclusivity	- Legal barriers to LMIC leadership or coordination roles
Financing	- Long-term financial commitment - Blended and diversified funding models - Effective and structural donor coordination	- High degree of administrative complexity and fragmented funding streams - Heavy reliance on public funds; unclear long-term financial sustainability - Limited flexibility for philanthropic or private donor contributions
Capacity & regional ownership	- Focus on capacity building, local leadership - Creation of regional hubs and networks - Tailoring partnerships to national priorities - Support for regulatory and innovation ecosystems	- Limited national ownership or Member State engagement - Limited inclusion of subnational actors and SMEs - Limited institutional capacity or coordination in partner countries - Risk of perceived EU dominance in design
Responsive-ness & innovation	- Flexibility in crisis response and rapid adaptation to evolving needs - Support for multi-sector innovation, including enhancing SME and third-country industrial participation	- Complex rules and limited agility - Slow processes and grant set-up due to bureaucracy or resource gaps - Siloed programme design limiting interdisciplinary solutions
Global integration	- Partnerships serve science diplomacy and multilateral cooperation - Synergies with other programmes and external initiatives (e.g. Global Gateway, Team Europe Initiatives)	- Weak integration with EU external action tools - Low international participation in EU-funded projects - Funding instruments not conducive to broad global collaboration

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

R&I partnerships have already been streamlined during the transitions from previous Framework Programmes to Horizon Europe. Still, few current instruments fully recognise the value of multi-stakeholder partnerships for global R&I to address global challenges. The landscape is dominated by EU-focused partnerships, alliances, and networks that would benefit from simpler priorities and enhanced access to resources. Future Framework Programmes must better enable and fund inclusive R&I partnership models. And they must build on the lessons learned, including from successful global partnerships and EU international engagements.

According to the FP10 Regulation Proposal and Specific Programme Proposal, under the new Multiannual Financial Framework (July 2025), **European Partnerships will remain central but be radically simplified and streamlined** in their operations and organisation. Co-funded partnerships will be discontinued. They will be replaced by a more straightforward system based on memoranda of understanding between the EU, at least five Member States, and private entities, for a broad and balanced involvement of key stakeholders.

Partnerships (public-public, public-private, or public-public-private) will be centrally managed to promote synergies, aligned with the European Competitiveness Fund, and selected through a competitive, transparent process. Partners will have to match EU funding with equal contributions. Partnerships will need to be strategically relevant, have pan-European impact, and have clear objectives, robust governance, and transition planning.

As evidenced by the case studies in Section 2, **the health domain is a leading example of successful EU R&I partnerships**, demonstrating the added value of R&I collaboration to the EU and global partners. A recent report on implementation of the EU Global Health Strategy further emphasises the foundational role of collaborative partnerships in future EU global health efforts.

Building on those experiences, the future FP10 could identify other priority areas, by focusing on shared societal needs, cross-border potential, and alignment with EU strategic values. As a recent CEPS report suggests, some priority areas where the EU can 'make a difference', including through multi-stakeholder R&I partnerships, are AI, women's health, mental health, the digital public infrastructure, climate change and biodiversity. Another CEPS report, *Towards an ambitious FP10*, suggests that priorities for the EU's R&I collaborations on global matters could be set by a Council for Global Challenges. Such a council would feature broad and inclusive governance, possibly involving LMICs, younger researchers, international donors, and philanthropic organisations.

Given the evolving geopolitical landscape, increasing resource constraints, and the complexity of global concerns, the recommended actions below suggest how to foster more effective, inclusive, and sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships under FP10.

- **Focus on long-term impact and stability.** Shift from collaborations that are initiative-specific and based on single work programmes to durable institutionalised partnerships- of which EDCPT3 and IHI Joint Undertakings are successful examples. Such a move could help to better use financial and institutional resources and address given issues holistically through long-term and inclusive research collaborations. This also involves assuring financial sustainability beyond initial support mechanisms and recognising that sustained public investment is often essential, especially where commercial interest is limited. In parallel, establishing monitoring frameworks and regular evaluations to identify successes, hindrances, and areas for improvement would enable R&I partnerships to remain adaptable to shifting needs.
- **Strengthen cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration.** Successful R&I partnerships thrive by bringing together a diverse range of global stakeholders- including governments, academia, the private sector, civil society, international organisations, and philanthropic groups - to pool resources and co-create solutions. Many global problems call for multi-perspective action and require integrated responses that bridge sectors and disciplines. All partnerships benefit from expanding their cross-sectoral reach by engaging a larger set of industries and stakeholders through inclusive mechanisms.

  Anticipating tighter EU budgets for tackling global challenges (given the current geopolitical context and EU focus on competitiveness and defence), it would be wise to establish under FP10 some structured mechanisms for cooperation with international donors and philanthropic organisations e.g. a Council for Global Challenges. Proactively engaging with global public and private donors would also necessitate clear legal and operational frameworks. These should facilitate public-private co-funding, ensure flexibility, and reduce administrative burdens in EU-funded programmes.
- **Adopt a flexible approach to the EU's role in global R&I partnerships.** As demonstrated in previous CEPS research, the EU has enormous potential to increase its effectiveness and leadership as an orchestrator of multi-stakeholder partnerships that channel global action and financial resources into dealing with global issues. Horizon Europe was conceived with the ambition of promoting synergies across EU funding programmes and positioning the EU as a key player in addressing shared concerns. Yet, despite valuable progress, the full potential of international, multi-stakeholder R&I partnerships remains untapped.

The EU should be open to contributing to R&I partnerships as either a leader or a partner. Depending on the topic, the EU and its Member States should jointly assess their strengths and local capacities, as well as their strategic priorities. The EU should then prioritise the most promising R&I partnerships, in order to encourage EU Member States to join them and contribute national funding. Horizon Europe accounts for less than 10% of overall public R&I funding in Europe, which makes a strong case for increasing national and private-sector R&I contributions, including through joint engagement in multi-stakeholder R&I partnerships.

- **Leverage partnerships' synergies with the Global Gateway and Team Europe Initiatives.** To maximise the global impact of FP10, EU R&I partnerships should be aligned with external instruments wherever possible, such as the Global Gateway and TEIs. These initiatives offer a largely untapped opportunity to co-deliver both R&I and infrastructure outcomes. FP10 should promote mission-oriented consortia that integrate research, innovation, and international cooperation, and which attract participation from global institutions and non-EU actors. These investments in science should contribute directly to broader development, economic, and diplomatic objectives.

  Synergies between Global Health EDCTP3 and TEI MAV+ demonstrate the potential of such alignment. In one example, Global Health EDCTP3 explicitly encourages applicants to align with TEI MAV+, for instance by incorporating technology transfer to African manufacturers, early engagement with regulators, or partnerships to scale locally produced health solutions. Efforts are also needed to address the suboptimal coordination between the different parts of the European Commission on 'research for development', particularly the Directorates-General for Research and Innovation and for International Partnerships.

- **Foster deeper, inclusive and more equitable partnerships.** As illustrated by the case studies, prioritisation of local ownership and inclusivity brings value to R&I partnerships. Local partners must be involved not only in the implementation but also in the design of partnerships for lasting impact and coherence with national priorities.

  Removing legal constraints that prevent institutions from certain regions (e.g. under Global Health EDCPT3) from acting as project coordinators could foster genuine leadership and an inclusive approach. Specific measures could draw in higher contributions and participation from non-EU partners and inspire South-South partnerships to facilitate scientific integration.

In terms of governance, institutionalised but equal R&I partnerships would help tailor them to local needs and encourage deep collaboration. Governance structures like that of Gavi could serve as models for allocating equal board seats to recipient and donor countries and for integrating co-financing requirements to promote national agency and local ownership. Creating more effective R&I partnerships requires building on existing regional infrastructures (e.g. GloPID-R's international members, and its Asia-Pacific and African regional hubs, contribute to connecting local expertise in LMICs with global health research efforts).

- **Streamline administrative processes and reduce legal barriers.** FP10 should consider more flexible approaches that will support international engagement, especially for industry partners from non-EU countries, to overcome existing administrative hurdles. Simplifying call processes will help prevent potential areas for cooperation from being overlooked and encourage researchers to submit proposals. The varying processes for funding (e.g. in PRIMA), along with administrative and legal barriers that hinder international cooperation (e.g. IHI), indicate the need for a more harmonised approach within FP10 to reduce complexity and increase success rates for international collaborations.

- **Build on the EU's strengths and expand international networks.** Leverage the EU's reputation as a trusted partner by capitalising on the growing interest in associations to Horizon Europe. and by building on successful bilateral and multilateral cooperation frameworks, such as the EU-AU Innovation Agenda, EU-Latin American and Caribbean Digital Alliance, and others outlined in the EU's Global Approach to Research and Innovation, along with the forthcoming New Pact for the Mediterranean.

  Using various cooperation frameworks can facilitate joint R&I activities in priority areas such as the environment, health, and digitalisation. As an example, under its International Digital Strategy, the EU seeks to deepen digital partnerships in cutting-edge fields such as quantum, AI, and semiconductors, while broadening networks of global partners through joint R&I projects. In the context of the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC), the EU and India launched two R&I initiatives under the Horizon Europe programme, with a total investment of €41 million. It has sought to bring together researchers, startups, and industries from the EU and India to develop sustainable, scalable solutions with global impact.

  Finally, as research and innovation have increasingly become a geopolitical currency, the EU's ambition to consolidate its science diplomacy provides promising opportunities for future global, multi-stakeholder partnerships on R&I.

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ANNEX

To read the annex tables, please click here.

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