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GÉANT Position Statement on the Design of Framework Programme 10

Executive Summary:

The necessity for a more cohesive and integrated approach in the European Union's funding for research and innovation is evident. The upcoming Framework Programme 10 (FP10) offers an essential opportunity to rectify the current fragmentation of the funding system. By designing FP10 to interlock seamlessly with other EU funding streams, we can reduce bureaucratic complexity and bolster Europe's leadership in scientific and technological domains.

The European Union's commitment to advancing research and innovation through a variety of framework programmes is well-established. Yet, the current design of these programmes often leads to unnecessary complexity, with programmes such as the Digital Europe Programme, the Connecting Europe Facility, and various joint undertakings and initiatives overlapping in objectives and creating a burdensome landscape for stakeholders. A reimagined FP10 should adopt an integrated approach, aligning with new initiatives like DEP2 and CEF3 to streamline the support for research projects and e-infrastructures, and reduce the administrative load currently faced by organisations who wish to engage in thematic areas of research and innovation in a holistic manner.

A particular challenge lies in the diversity of funding rates, indirect cost provisions, and eligibility requirements across programmes, which imposes significant management and reporting demands on organisations. GÉANT suggests that a harmonisation of these aspects would greatly aid entities engaged in cross-programme projects. Similarly, the enhancement of e-infrastructures is crucial, especially given the increasing demand for data capacity and secure connectivity brought on by initiatives like EuroHPC and the Digital Single Market.

Moreover, the various Directorate Generals of the European Commission should acknowledge the critical role of public digital service providers such as GÉANT. These providers are key to enacting developments in public policy and achieving the EU's ambitious Digital Decade objectives. Sustained and targeted funding in FP10 would ensure these infrastructures remain robust and conducive to innovation, with improved communication and strategic alignment between Directorate Generals. A sincere effort to improve institutional collaboration is more vital than ever.

The inclusive eligibility criteria of Horizon Europe, allowing non-EU countries to participate in funding parts of the programme, has fostered international collaboration and should be preserved in FP10. This not only exemplifies European soft power but also extends European values internationally, improving societal issues through science diplomacy.

In conclusion, FP10 has the potential to transform the EU's research funding framework significantly. By aligning funding sources with single policy objectives, we can diminish the ongoing fragmentation and enhance the efficiency of the system. GÉANT calls for a unified approach in FP10, advocating for a funding environment that effectively supports the EU's research, science, and education sectors, with a clear, concentrated design.