Could you share one mechanism or experience that has helped your agency connect excellent research with development priorities, strategic technologies, or industry needs? What is the most important lesson you have learned?

One example is the 2022 call for **Technology and Innovation Infrastructures** funded under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). The initiative was based on a **public-private partnership model**, allowing industry to be directly involved from the design phase. Companies could contribute their expertise and, most importantly, help identify concrete technological needs and services required by the market.

The main lesson we learned is that **involving industry from the very beginning** helps ensure that research and innovation investments remain scientifically ambitious while also responding to real economic and societal needs. This strengthens the uptake and long-term impact of the supported infrastructures.

Discussion 1 – Balancing the funding portfolio

How should funding programmes be designed to preserve space for excellent research and fundamental research while also supporting strategic technologies and responding to industry needs?

As I mentioned yesterday, the starting point is to **ensure stable and predictable funding for fundamental research** and for the research system as a whole. Research organisations and universities need sufficient resources to maintain infrastructures, attract and retain talent, and support a critical mass of skilled personnel.

When this foundation is in place, researchers and institutions are better prepared **to respond to emerging priorities and** contribute to strategic technologies when needed. In other words, excellent and curiosity-driven research should not be seen as competing with strategic objectives. A strong and well-funded research base is precisely what enables countries to address specific technological, industrial, and societal challenges through targeted programmes and investments.

Discussion 2 – Engaging industry in research and technology development

How can funding agencies encourage businesses to participate throughout the research and technology development process, from defining needs and co-funding projects to testing and commercializing results? What safeguards are needed to ensure public value, scientific independence, research integrity,

financial accountability, *fair risk-sharing*, *and clear intellectual property arrangements?*

Funding agencies, in Italy case Ministries can encourage business participation through **collaborative research programmes** that involve industry from the start. These projects help both researchers and companies develop new competences, build trust, and create lasting networks.

In Italy, for example, under the **NRRP** and EU Structural Funds, we established Innovation Ecosystems and National Centres bringing together universities, research organisations, and companies. These structures also launched competitive calls on specific topics, helping connect research excellence with industry needs.

The key safeguards are transparent governance, clear intellectual property rules, competitive funding procedures, and robust monitoring, ensuring public value while preserving scientific independence and accountability

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Discussion 3 – Cooperation among funding agencies

Which forms of cooperation could be piloted first—co-funding, *joint calls*, *joint evaluation*, *or sharing expert reviewers? Which fields would be most suitable for exploring future collaboration?*

I believe the first step should be the **exchange of experiences** through staff exchanges and peer-learning activities. Understanding how other agencies work, and how research and innovation systems works in other countries helps everyone learn and identify good practices.

Joint projects are also very valuable because they allow research institutions to get to know each other, build networks, and lay the groundwork for more stable long-term collaborations.

In parallel, **bilateral agreements** between countries could help create a framework for future joint calls, co-funding schemes, and shared evaluation activities. Research infrastructures, digital technologies, and green transition topics would be good areas to start with.