

Activity Report

2025

Mission Europe
pour la Recherche

amU Aix
Marseille
Université



Inserm





2025

The year of consolidation

Table of contents

Key milestones for 2025	7
Introduction	8
1. Consolidating the MER's organisation and establishing its position	10
1.1. Relying on a collective as the force driving the MER's success	11
1.2. Adapting support to European dynamics	12
1.3. Taking part in the Aix-Marseille site's structuring initiatives	13
1.4. Promoting the MER model at the national and European levels	15
2. Targeting funding opportunities and reinforcing the Europeanisation of the site	18
2.1. Enriching the expertise of detection engineers	19
2.2. Providing personalised and harmonised support	20
2.3. Anticipating the European transition from Horizon Europe to future Framework Programme	21
2.4. Providing training to bolster the site's stakeholders' European culture	22
3. Strengthening support for research teams - from set-up to implementation	24
3.1. Rolling out collaborative practices to organise the flow of activity	25
3.2. Responding to the specific requirements of coordinated projects	26
3.3. Securing negotiations and formalising project monitoring	28
4. Equipping ourselves with tools and processes to boost our performance	30
4.1. Stabilising the digital working environment and promoting shared operations	31
4.2. Improving shared tools and processes	32
4.3. Rolling out the MER's legal support in collaboration with the partner organisations	32
4.4. Implementing the site's incentive policy to encourage European projects	33
Conclusion: Horizon 2026 - assessing the impact and reinforcing the model	35

Appendices	36
Appendix 1. Diagram of the MER's organisation serving researchers and academics	36
Appendix 2. Visual representation of the Mission Europe for Research's service offering	37

List of boxes

- BOX 1. THREE COFUNDS FOR AIX-MARSEILLE: CONFIRMED EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP**
- BOX 2. MULTI-ANNUAL ACTION PLAN FOR EUROPE – FLAGSHIP ACTIONS FOR 2025**
- BOX 3. TESTIMONIAL FROM NICOLAS BADALASSI, DIRECTOR OF THE MESOPOLHIS UNIT**
- BOX 4. TESTIMONIAL ON COORDINATION SUPPORT – DANIELA BANARU, MIO**
- BOX 5. KEY FIGURES – COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION OF ACTIONS**





Key milestones for 2025

January

14/01 - ERC COG 2025 deadline
20/01 - MER psychosocial risk awareness

February

05/02 - MSCA SE 2024 deadline
07/02 - Webinar - Launch of the *Fonds Impulsion Europe*
27/02 - Gender training by amU's VP for Gender Equality

Mar

05/03 - MER Steering Committee
10/03 - Publication of the first MER activity report (year 2024)
12/03 - MER presentation - CNRS Day
13/03 - Launch of the EPM mutualisation working group
19/03 - Ministry GCTE on the launch of the FP10 initiative in France
24/03 - 2nd MER/Inserm DR/DPRE/IT meeting

April

01/04 - Presentation of the MER's experience to the *Institut des hautes études de l'éducation et de la formation's* cycle auditors
08/04 - Presentation of the MER assessment at the amU RGE
24/04 - Information session - ERC StG
28/04 - Drafting workshop - ERC AdGG

May

05-06/05 - Training - setting up a collaborative European project - HEUR Pillar 2
06-08/05 - Annual EARMA Conference
14/05 - Training - The fundamentals of European funding - HEUR
19/05 - COMEX Booster

June

06/06 - Workshop with COFUND project leaders
11/06 - Meetings with members of the Brussels offices of the CNRS, the IRD and the Inserm
12/06 - Conference: Advancing Europe's leadership in Life Science
16/06 - Amidex Steering Committee: validation of American researchers who are ERC candidates
23/06 - ERC Starting Grant drafting workshop
26/06 - MSCA PF workshop
30/06 - DRV seminar – MER invitation

July

01/07 - MER RETEX Day
22/07 - Q&A Session - MSCA PF

August

28/08 - ERC AdG 2025

September

05/09 - RETEX CODIR MER Day
10/09 - MSCA PF Deadline
16/09 - Deadline for Clusters 1, 2, 5 and 6
16-17/09 - R&I Days
18/09 - Infras Deadline
22/09 - 'Mobilising Horizon Europe for excellence in French research' symposium
29/09 - Continuation of RETEX MER: updating service offering and coordinated projects
30/09 - MER Steering Committee
30/09 - Training in HEUR fundamentals provided by the MER

October

01/10 - Deadline for the Land + Ocean Mission
08/10 - MSCA SE deadline
09/10 - CERClE Info Session – ERC Consolidator Grant
14/10 - ERC Starting deadline
29/10 - EIC PC deadline
31/10 - 2025 Annual Report – Booster Europe section

November

05/11 - ERC Synergy deadline
07/11 - ERC Drafting Workshop – Consolidator Grant
17/11 - Launch of the EPM network
17/11 - Amidex Steering Committee – Booster project with ANR attendees
25 et 27/11 - MSCA DN deadline

December

01 and 15/12 - Training provided by MER: Setting up a collaborative project – Pillar 2 HEUR
02/12 - Franco-Lithuanian networking event – Cluster 1 Health and Cancer Mission
02/12 - Webinar: European funding for research and innovation in the cultural and creative industries (CCI) – Horizon Europe 2026-2027
03/12 - MSCA Deadline – Choose Europe – COFUND
04/12 - CERClE plenary session – Meeting with Christine Courillon, ERCEA
08-09-11/12 - Adobe Illustrator training
16/12 - MER team cohesion seminar

Introduction

The Mission Europe for Research (MER) led by Aix-Marseille University, the CNRS, the Inserm and the IRD was launched on January 1st 2024 and consolidated its position in 2025 while establishing itself as the key stakeholder at the Aix-Marseille site in supporting researchers and academics in their efforts to take part in European R&I programmes.

The MER has evolved in a rapidly changing environment deriving from the European context of transition marked by the entry into the Horizon Europe programme's final phase and the emergence of exploratory developments (pilot programmes, lump sums, ERC developments, etc.) for the next programme. In this context with the preparative work for the future Framework Programme and the European Competitiveness Fund, the MER has established itself as the single European point of contact for the four partner organisations on the Aix-Marseille site. This context is also characterised by the affirmation of strong European priorities impacting research and innovation through the publication of strategies linked to the competitiveness compass and the launch of programmes like *Choose Europe*.

After the year of its creation in 2024, 2025 was a year for consolidation.

The MER provides localised tailored support based on complementary expertise and the development of new skills among its team of over 20 staff members. Acquiring these new skills was made possible by funding from the French National Research Agency (ANR) in the framework of the ASDESR (*Accelerating the development strategies of higher education and research institutions*) call for projects via the BOOSTER project led by Aix-Marseille University. This support is also based on continuous training for the MER team and professionalized by tools and processes to ensure the implementation of projects for the partner organisations. As the first fully shared European unit of this scale, the MER's work on the Aix-Marseille site and in the field of European projects stands out as a successful simplification model for research units.

The MER took a decisive step forward by enhancing its internal organisation and external visibility. The team is now both complete, complementary and structured around its General Management Committee (CODIR), the Detection and Engineering Units, and a steering and support team. The relationship of trust between its governing authorities has helped establish a fluid, agile organisation and enhanced coordination.

Individualised support and a continuous process of improvement in service quality have been driven by the harmonisation of practices, the enrichment of the service offering, the upskilling of staff members and increased cooperation between the MER's Units. 267 European projects were submitted in 2025, representing a 35% increase compared to 2024. In 2025, 21 new projects were also launched. The rollout of tools and procedures, the reinforcement of the team's cohesion, the consolidation of our legal support and the increased promotion of the MER's actions testify to this collective dynamic.

The Multi-Year Action Plan for Europe (PAPE) supported by the Amidex Foundation is now in its rollout phase, contributing to this collective strategic dynamic and helping to establish the MER as a model of support that is fully integrated into the Aix-Marseille site's strategy. This year was particularly marked by the launch of the *Fonds Impulsion Europe*, the site's network of European Project Managers (EPMs) and the renewed activities of CERClé, the Aix-Marseille site's ERC club.



<p>Horizon Europe (2021-2025) amU-CNRS-Inserm-IRD</p>	<p>169 projects funded as of January 1st 2026, including:</p> <p>69 collaborative projects, of which 11 were coordinated</p> <p>47 ERC projects</p> <p>53 Marie Curie projects, including 5 COFUND and 18 DNs</p>
<p>1013 projects submitted between 2021 and 2025</p> <hr/> <p>€131.3 M in European subsidies managed by the organisations involved</p>	



<p>Activity Year 2025 amU-CNRS-Inserm-IRD</p>	<p>Project initiation work</p> <p>209 projects in the pre-detection phase for submission between 2025 and 2027</p> <p>103 interventions within units on the site</p> <p>33 National Thematic Group (GTN) consultations on upcoming European work programmes</p>
<p>Projects supported in 2025</p> <p>318 projects, including 267 submitted projects:</p> <p>19 projects in coordination</p> <p>71 ERC projects</p> <p>26 projects under contract</p>	

1.

Consolidating the
MER's organisation and
establishing its position



1.1 Relying on a collective as the force driving the MER's success

The MER's success above all relies on the strength of its collective. In 2025, the MER continued to consolidate its internal organisation to support its growing activities and provide increasingly structured support for the site's research teams.

STABILISED FUNCTIONING

In 2025, the MER continued adjusting and consolidating its organisation to respond effectively to the continuing increase and growing complexity of its work. The 22 staff members (recruitment is still ongoing) of the MER have been structured into teams to ensure effective, transparent and high-level support for the Aix-Marseille site's scientific community (see organisational chart in Appendix 1).

The Engineering Unit was reorganised around two complementary work areas to provide greater clarity in project engineering activities and a smoother management of activity flows:

- a 'project development' work area providing support for drafting and submitting European projects, with a particular focus on coordinated projects which are a strategic priority for the ASDESR Booster project;
- a 'monitoring and contracting' area, dedicated to securing the post-submission (post-grant) stages, liaising with the managing supervisory authorities and coordinating the stakeholders involved in implementing funded projects.

This organisational structure reflects the growing expertise of the team and distributes workloads more efficiently while bolstering the continuity of support throughout the life cycle of European projects to optimise the management of peaks in activity. It also contributes to enhanced anticipation and increased security for the site's high-stakes projects.

From the start of 2025, the MER has been working on clarifying roles and structuring its transversal activities which has led to a 'Steering and Support' team being set up. This team will play a central role in steering activities, developing collective skills and ensuring day-to-day operations run smoothly. For example, the team is responsible for structuring and monitoring activity indicators, harmonising practices and procedures, leading internal experience-sharing sessions, and supporting resource planning to dovetail with European calendar schedules.

In 2025, the MER reduced the frequency of its comitology meetings and instead now relies on a Steering Committee (COFIL) made up of political representatives from the MER's partner organisations and a Monitoring Committee (COSUI) involving the four partner organisations' research and partnership departments. The aim of this shift is to build on a relationship of trust and shared responsibility with these organisations to reinforce the MER's operational autonomy and accelerate decision-making processes. This provides the MER with a clear and stable framework that promotes its operational independence and ability to make a European strategy work that serves the site.

All of these adjustments have contributed to the emergence of a more agile, robust and sustainable operating model which is more in line with the site's requirements and the growing demands of European programmes.

A STRUCTURING COLLECTIVE DYNAMIC

From its creation, the MER has been constructed on the basis of an agile and deeply collaborative operating model in which collective thought and study along with co-construction work by staff members have been core levers for the development of its activities.

Today, this collective dimension remains essential to driving the MER's evolution. The MER is progressing thanks to the active involvement of its staff members, their capacity for initiative and a continuous process of improving practices. The annual RETEX feedback session organised in July 2025 was a highlight of this dynamic. Collective discussions and analyses facilitated the adjustment of support methods, the optimisation of internal processes and the identification of shared areas for improvement at the overall mission level and also within all of the MER's Units.

This capacity to collectively design, develop and consolidate the MER is a key success factor. It means that activities can be continuously adapted to the requirements of the Aix-Marseille site's research teams while also promoting buy-in, commitment and a sense of belonging among MER staff members. This dynamic was particularly reflected in collective work to define the MER's values launched in December 2025. This unifying exercise led to the formalisation of a common identity based on four fundamental principles - **respect, collective spirit, commitment and openness** - set out in a charter of values shared by our team. These values now form a structuring foundation for the MER's daily work and its continued development in support of the site's European strategy.

1.2. Adapting support to European dynamics

A 35% RISE IN APPLICATIONS

The European schedule is increasingly demanding so the MER has developed proactive, structured and agile support to help maximise the chances of success of the Aix-Marseille site's research teams. More specifically, the MER has coordinated up to twenty projects in complex and competitive calls for proposals. Enhanced monitoring and tailored tools have helped the MER turn such challenges into opportunities. This is reflected in the **267 projects submitted in 2025 (+35% compared to 2024)**, including 20 coordinated projects, **71 ERC projects** and **118 MSCA projects**. This dynamic clearly illustrates how effective the MER's shared model is and how it has been able to adapt to changes in European programmes.

AN ADAPTED SERVICE OFFERING TO SUPPORT THESE CHANGES

In this context, the MER has developed its service offering to support the scientific community in anticipating European initiatives and to ensure the team has the capacity to cope with high cyclical submission volumes while maintaining the quality of the support on offer. The MER'S support is structured around the four main categories of European projects – coordination projects, partnership projects, ERC and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) – with the conditions for access and the key stages in setting up projects within tight deadlines clarified.

This service was updated in 2025, primarily to:

- make all the support mechanisms on offer and the synergies with the actions rolled out in the framework of the Multi-Annual Action Plan for Europe (see Box 2) more visible and readable;
- enhance anticipation of submissions through indicative reverse schedules tailored to different sorts of projects;
- guarantee high quality personalised support that is proportionate to the challenges involved.

In response to the significant increase in applications, the MER has simultaneously bolstered its internal processes, particularly by updating procedures, rolling out new monitoring tools and continuing to develop the skills of its staff members. There has been a particular focus on coordinated projects and on providing early support to ERC and MSCA applicants to help ensure their success. Regular analysis of results and feedback is used to enhance best practices, optimise resource allocation and for the continuous improvement of the site's collective performance in European programmes.

1.3. Taking part in the Aix-Marseille site's structuring initiatives

FROM 'SAFE PLACE FOR SCIENCE' TO 'CHOOSE EUROPE'

In 2025, the Mission actively contributed to several structuring dynamics on the Aix-Marseille site, bolstering its role in providing strategic and operational support for the internationalisation of research and the reinforcement of its excellence. It particularly supported American researchers selected in the framework of the 'Safe Place for Science' initiative in their efforts to integrate and look to the future in Europe, with specific focus on preparing ERC project submissions from August 2025 onwards. Alongside this, the MER works on the strategic monitoring of the 'Choose Europe' programme launched at the European level and contributed significantly to its dissemination and promotion among European Commission bodies and the relevant French ministries' European teams.

The MER also strengthened its support for its partner organisations in structuring their European projects through awareness-raising and information activities twinned with highly operational assistance in setting up projects. In this area, the MER played a decisive role in supporting several Marie Skłodowska-Curie – COFUND applications with three key programmes led in 2025 by establishments on the site - a PhD programme coordinated by the Neuromarseille Institute, and two postdoctoral programmes led by the Marseille Imaging Institute and the Institute for Microbiology, Bioenergies and Biotechnology (IM2B).



BOX 1. THREE COFUND PROGRAMMES FOR AIX-MARSEILLE: CONFIRMED EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP

With **three MSCA COFUND programmes** coordinated by Aix-Marseille University and co-funded by **Amidex**, the Aix-Marseille site is asserting its European leadership in research training and attractiveness. **Aix-Marseille University** is now ranked **the third European university in COFUND coordination** and considered **the leading French stakeholder** which illustrates the effectiveness of an integrated site strategy. These new projects led by the University's institutions reflect the site's capacity to combine scientific excellence, international attractiveness and sustainable talent development. They are also a key lever for enhancing the visibility of Aix-Marseille University and actively preparing for the dynamics of the future Framework Programme. They therefore join the list of COFUND projects selected in the framework of Horizon Europe.

- 1 – IMACS Project** – Accessible Imaging: shaping the future of imaging, Institutional Institute: Marseille Imaging
Recruitment: 17 postdoctoral fellows
- 2 – Microbio-SEED Project** – Diversity, Emergence and Ecosystems, Synthetic Biology of Microbes, Institution: IM2B
Recruitment: 10 postdoctoral fellows
- 3 – Brain-MUSE Project** – MultiScale Exploration of the Brain, Institution: NeuroMarseille
Recruitment: 14 PhD Students

This coordination work dovetails with the **Schadoc doctoral programme (2024)** which aims to fund 40 doctoral contracts in 2025 and 2026 on one of the following themes: Societies and Culture; Climate Change and Environmental Challenges; Health and Well-Being; Artificial Intelligence.

TAKING PART IN THE 'RESEARCH 2040' FORESIGHT PROJECT

The MER has been involved in this collective initiative from the outset. 'Research 2040' aims to anticipate major scientific, societal and technological transformations by 2040 to construct a shared strategic vision for research. This initiative has robust roots in Europe in line with the priorities of the European Research Area and with strengthening European competitiveness. The MER's involvement is intended to help position Aix-Marseille University as a long-term reference site for European cooperation, funding and scientific orientation. Working as an interface between support services, research units and governance bodies, the MER plays a key role in dovetailing the site's institutional strategy with European dynamics. Its involvement in foresight initiatives and the growing role it plays in leading the 'Défis' (*Challenges*) groups will contribute to structuring scientific priorities and preparing post-2027 European Framework Programmes, in this way reinforcing the site's capacity for anticipation, influence and European projection.

1.4. Promoting the MER model at the national and European levels

BROADENING THE REACH OF THE MER MODEL

The MER's organisational and support model benefited from significantly enhanced national and European visibility in 2025. It was presented to the *cycle des auditeurs*¹ run by the *Institut des Hautes Études de l'Éducation et de la Formation* (IH2EF) as an innovative experiment run on a university site and praised as a structure that «*perfectly illustrates the strategic agility required in a context of increased autonomy*»². At the 'Mobilisons Horizon Europe pour l'excellence de la recherche française' conference, the Minister for Higher Education and Research cited the MER as an example of successful pooling of resources, and the Head of the MER spoke about the experiment. The MER is also one of the success stories in research management the European Commission highlighted when promoting innovative structures to support the scientific community.

This recognition reinforces the position of the MER in the European research support landscape and testifies to its model's importance for the promotion of the site's scientific performance levels.

1. An event during the IH2EF's academic year at which 25 to 30 management staff with varied profiles take on the role of auditors.
2. <https://www.ih2ef.gouv.fr/oser-agir-le-rapport-final-du-cycle-des-hautes-etudes-2024-2025>

CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL DISCUSSIONS

The MER is actively involved in several national structuring initiatives dedicated to supporting European projects and thus contributes to the collective national thought process on the development of support mechanisms in France. In particular, the MER works alongside the Bettencourt Schueller Foundation, the ERC National Contact Point (NCP) and different working groups led by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Space (MESRE). These consultation forums enable feedback from institutions to be shared, the identification of levers and barriers to French participation, and the development of strategic guidelines intended to increase the number of European Research Council (ERC) grants obtained.

As part of this dynamic, the MER also contributed to working groups led by the MESRE to take part in the development of a new national action plan on increasing the participation and performance of French teams in European Framework Programmes. The objective of this work is to improve upstream support for applications, reinforce the structure of local support ecosystems and promote enhanced coordination between institutional strategies and European priorities.

The MER is also fully represented in the national network of ASDESR projects, led by the University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne, thus contributing to exchanges between institutions on models for organising support for European projects and taking part in collective work to ensure the organisational and financial sustainability of this pooling mechanism. This positioning means the MER can contribute to a national dynamic aimed at professionalising practices, sharing best methods and sustainably strengthening support capacities to enhance the European performance of French university sites while also supporting the sustainability of our model.



BOX 2. MULTI-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR EUROPE – FLAGSHIP ACTIONS IN 2025

In the framework of its Roadmap 4.0, the Amidex Steering Committee allocated a budget of €780k over four years for the Multi-Year Action Plan for Europe (PAPE) to sustainably reinforce the Aix-Marseille site's participation in European funding. This plan is made up of eight action points and was approved by the MER's Steering Committee on December 13th 2024 for its rollout over the 2025-2027 period.

Among these actions, three structural measures were launched in 2025.

The 'Fonds Impulsion Europe': supporting the emergence and maturation of projects

This 'European Impulse Fund' is a key lever for supporting the development of European projects, particularly for first-time applicants. It is based on four complementary mechanisms - pre-initiation, initiation, development (re-submission) and a modulation scheme to free up time for academics. In 2025, the MER structured the selection and evaluation processes, developed a model letter of commitment to enhance funding transparency, and supported 11 projects for a total of €20,866. A specific campaign was also run that targeted MSCA-Postdoctoral Fellowship applications.

CERCle: strengthening the excellence of ERC applications

strategic information to the preparation of candidate interviews. In 2025, the MER rolled out a comprehensive system that combines information sessions, project drafting workshops led by an external expert, mock interviews and the organisation of a dedicated plenary session. The results illustrate the approach's effectiveness – there were **eight ERC winners in the 2025 calls, two winners were welcomed to the site in 2025 and eight Advanced Grant projects were selected at the oral stage**. In this way, Aix-Marseille has become one of the best-performing French sites in these highly competitive calls. All of this work will continue in 2026, with a targeted reinforcement of support for humanities and social sciences projects to consolidate this dynamic of excellence in the long term.

The European Project Managers (EPM) network: securing the implementation of European projects

In 2025 the increase in collaborative projects coordinated on site led to the MER spearheading the creation of a network of European Project Managers. After a framing phase based on interviews and an onsite survey, the network was officially launched on November 17th 2025 during a working day attended by the EPMs. This collective dynamic led to the emergence of four strategic priorities for 2026. These are: structuring the network, pooling documentation, offering dedicated training and clarifying the role and skills of EPMs. This network is an essential lever for securing European funding, professionalising project monitoring and boosting the site's attractiveness at the European level.

2.

Targeting funding opportunities and reinforcing the Europeanisation of the site



2.1. Enriching the expertise of detection engineers

In 2025, the expertise acquired by the MER's detection engineers was a major pillar in the drive to improve the quality of monitoring, refine the detection of opportunities and provide the right advice for project leaders.

STRENGTHENING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH PORTFOLIOS

These detection engineers now have in-depth knowledge of the units they support after over a year of working with a portfolio-based approach. All the structures in their portfolios have been contacted or visited and this has consolidated the engineers' understanding of their research areas, scientific development strategies and knowledge of the history of participation in European calls for proposals. A relationship of trust has been established between the MER and many of the site's researchers and academics. The members of the MER's Detection Unit have been identified as valid contacts for designing a European strategy tailored to the type of research project (individual or collaborative, fundamental or applied research). Enhancing their knowledge of their thematic portfolios also mean the engineers can play a more active role in the development of European work programmes by identifying emerging themes within the units they work with or by contributing to the definition of national priorities within the National Thematic Groups (GTNs).

Alongside strengthening their knowledge of the research areas of the units for which they are the point of contact, the Detection Unit's staff members have developed expertise on transversal topics related to their portfolios (Nagoya Protocol, ethics, gender, clinical trials, etc.). Members of the Detection Unit have become advisors on these cross-cutting themes, working in collaboration with their counterparts from the Engineering Unit. In this way, they are developing technical expertise on key topics for carrying out responsible and sustainable research.

ROLLING OUT INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ANALYSIS

The team has equipped itself with tools for monitoring and analysing laboratory publications to help increase their expertise. Detection engineers have received in-house training in using the Web of Science as its bibliometric analysis capacity means scientific trends can be identified within laboratories and publications and key European co-authors can be tracked. This information is then cross-referenced with European work programmes to identify calls for proposals that represent opportunities for research on the Aix-Marseille site.

The MER is also testing a platform based on artificial intelligence and keyword analysis to be able to suggest relevant calls for projects. The platform also identifies researchers and academics who have published work that corresponds to the keywords entered.

Testing these new innovative approaches means the Detection Unit can explore whether they can effectively complement ongoing work to offer individualised and harmonised monitoring to research teams on the site.

2.2. Providing personalised and harmonised support

The rollout of pooled methods and new communication ideas twinned with a strong presence within the units have all made it possible to structure the support provided and make it more consistent alongside a personalised approach for the units and research personnel.

HARMONISATION OF PRACTICES AND TOOLS

Right from the launch of the MER, this form of harmonisation was identified as a priority. From the outset, considerable efforts along these lines have been made by developing common processes and creating shared tools while ensuring their gradual implementation. This momentum continued in 2025 with the production of a networking service offer and a shared directory on the site. These new tools mean agents can offer the site's research personnel exactly the same support to facilitate the identification of partners or coordinators and share information on local, national and European contacts or networks deemed useful for collaboration opportunities.

As a complement to this, the creation and completion of the **Fiches Europe Unité** (*Unit Files For Europe*) is another important milestone in the MER's work. These summary documents aggregate the following information for all the research units on the site:

- an analysis by each unit team of their research themes;
- relevant programmes and calls for proposals;
- the history of participation in European schemes;
- an extraction of the main bibliometric keywords from the team's publications;
- personalised recommendations to reinforce participation in European calls for proposals.

These files are designed to be 'living' tools that are updated regularly to keep up with changes in the units' scientific strategies and dovetail with the process of individualising and harmonising support. Finally, these files help promote internal information sharing within the MER, both between those working on the site to strengthen cross-collaboration between units and the rest of the team.

A REINFORCED PRESENCE IN LABORATORIES

Presence on campuses is, as always, a key principle underpinning the MER's work. Visits to research units help raise awareness and enable the identification of ideas for projects and the researchers and academics who would like to get involved in European initiatives. There are two main types of visits - information meetings or Europe 'surgeries'. At information meetings, detection engineers present the European programmes covered by the MER, the support on offer, and the calls for proposals that suit the research unit or institute concerned. During European 'surgeries', detection engineers carry out individual interviews with interested researchers and academics to answer their questions, assess the suitability of an application, provide guidance on the choice of a programme or advise on anticipating an application schedule.

In 2025, members of the Detection Unit made 96 visits to 57 different laboratories and institutes. These visits helped build lasting relationships of trust with project leaders and served to raise the MER's profile among research teams. This dynamic is reflected in the support provided by the Project Engineering Unit, backed by the Detection Unit's proactive actions which include advice, selection of relevant calls for proposals and strategic targeting of projects. As a result, 80% of the projects receiving support from the Engineering Unit were previously assessed and recommended by the Detection Unit's advisors.

This result demonstrates testifies to the quality of the support offered and shows how effectively the MER is anchored in the site's landscape and how practices have gradually evolved among the research teams involved. These now rely primarily on the contacts identified with the MER's support and no longer on their own 'historical' contacts or organisations that pre-dated the MER.

DIVERSIFYING COMMUNICATION METHODS

Since its creation, the Detection Unit has always adapted its communication strategy to the expectations and requirements of the site's researchers and academics by using targeted dissemination of information rather than generic mass communication. As well as the traditional institutional communication tools used (website, news relayed by institutions, LinkedIn publications, and generalist messages to unit managers) particular attention is paid to the relevance and personalisation of the information that is disseminated.

As part of this approach, each member of the Detection Unit also provides individualised communication to potential project leaders by sending them information and calls for projects directly related to their research. The launch of thematic mailing lists at the end of 2025 complemented and reinforced this tailored approach. The Detection Unit's detailed knowledge of the site units' research topics made it possible to identify the site's scientific communities that work on common issues. A bibliometric analysis of the staff members' portfolios was then used to select topics to create relevant mailing lists. A total of 73 scientific communities carrying out research related to European priorities were identified. These mailing lists provide a direct and responsive channel of communication with a broad audience of researchers and academics who can freely subscribe or unsubscribe according to their requirements. These tools are already attracting considerable interest just a few weeks after their launch. Over 320 researchers and academics have subscribed to one or more lists, and the Detection Unit is processing new subscription requests on a weekly basis.

2.3. Anticipating the European transition from Horizon Europe to future Framework Programmes

In the context of the transition between the end of Horizon Europe and preparing for the future Framework Programme, the Detection Unit has reinforced its role in analysis, monitoring and anticipation.

ANALYSIS OF THE END OF THE HORIZON EUROPE PROGRAMME

In 2025, the Detection Unit continued its active participation in GTNs and the preparatory work for the 2026-2027 work programmes. Alongside this, the team carried out in-depth analyses of various trends at the European level and on the Aix-Marseille site. These included a Cluster-by-Cluster study of the evolution of French success rates from Horizon 2020 to the latest Horizon Europe calls for proposals.

This analysis highlighted an increase in the competitiveness of many Horizon Europe Clusters. This development can be partly explained by the increase in the number of projects submitted to European programmes, the growing oversubscription of calls, and the rise of projects that use artificial intelligence approaches. The Detection Unit uses this detailed monitoring of these success rates as a decision-making tool that means it can advise researchers and academics effectively on the programmes and Clusters that offer the best opportunities as the Horizon Europe programme comes to an end.

FORESIGHT ANALYSIS OF UPCOMING EUROPEAN FRAMEWORKS

While analysing the end of the Horizon Europe programme, the MER has launched a foresight exercise to support the site in its transition to the next European research and innovation framework (pilot calls that give an idea of the future Framework Programme and upcoming Programmes). In this context, the Detection Unit provides ongoing monitoring which particularly focuses on:

- European strategies associated with the European 'competitiveness compass' (artificial intelligence, life sciences, bioeconomy, infrastructure, innovation support strategies, etc.);
- the future multi-annual financial framework (2028-2031);
- initial announcements about the architecture and budget of the next Framework Programme;
- the future Competitiveness Fund.

This foresight approach is intended to anticipate developments in the European landscape and contribute to the strategic preparation of the Aix-Marseille site. Information and analyses considered relevant are shared within the MER so that all staff members can appropriate them and take them into account when supporting projects.

This monitoring of the future Framework Programme dovetails with the scientific foresight study for 2040 on the Aix-Marseille site which the MER's Detection Unit and Head are taking part in. It also means the MER's General Management Committee (CODIR) can anticipate the challenges facing the site's institutions and provide the Steering Committee and the COSUI with analyses of European priorities and structural initiatives likely to have a major impact on the site.

2.4. Providing training to bolster the site's stakeholders' European culture

The MER has designed two new training initiatives for 2025 that dovetail with the HRS4R strategy rolled out on the Aix-Marseille site in connection with the European Charter for Researchers and with the aim of reinforcing the Europeanisation of research and the acculturation of staff members. These courses complement existing courses, particularly the training that is already provided by the Engineering Department in partnership with Aix-Marseille University's PhD Training Department (DFD). Both courses were run twice during the year.

- **The fundamentals of European funding**, run twice for a mixed audience of BIATSS³ staff, researchers and academics with a total of 28 participants.
- **Setting up collaborative projects under Pillar 2 of Horizon Europe**, aimed at coordinators and aspiring coordinators. Two sessions were run for 11 participants, eight of whom were involved in submitting a collaborative project in coordination.
- The half-day training course '**The Fundamentals of Horizon Europe**' was run twice for 28 participants. It provides a comprehensive introduction to the programme and its various funding mechanisms. It is for all staff members (whether administrative or in research) who would like to find out more about how Horizon Europe works and its rules for participation.

3. Librarians, engineers, administrative, technical, social and healthcare staff

- The one-and-a-half-day **'Setting up coordinated Pillar 2 collaborative projects' training course** was run twice for 11 participants, eight of whom were involved in submitting a collaborative project. It is designed for a targeted audience and based on tangible cases, practical exercises and work on real projects led by the participants. It provides a methodology for designing collaborative projects while raising participants' awareness of the specific requirements and responsibilities associated with the role of project leader. The MER aims to make this training an integral part of the support programme for coordinators. In 2025, 42% of the coordinators submitting Pillar 2 projects benefited from this training.

These training courses were developed with the support of the École de Développement des Talents (EDT) led by the Amidex Foundation, programme 1 of the IDeAL project and the site's ExcellenceS project which supports the development of new skills for staff members.

These training courses, which are to be repeated on a regular basis, contribute to structuring a common base of knowledge on European programmes within the Aix-Marseille site and to strengthening the collective capacity to respond to European calls for projects. They are also part of a broader reflection on skill development and the evolution of research professions, both at the site level and at the European level, in line with the European Commission's initiatives relating to the European Research Competence Framework (RM Comp).

Ultimately, new training initiatives may be developed to offer a comprehensive range of courses tailored to the different requirements of those working on the Aix-Marseille site.



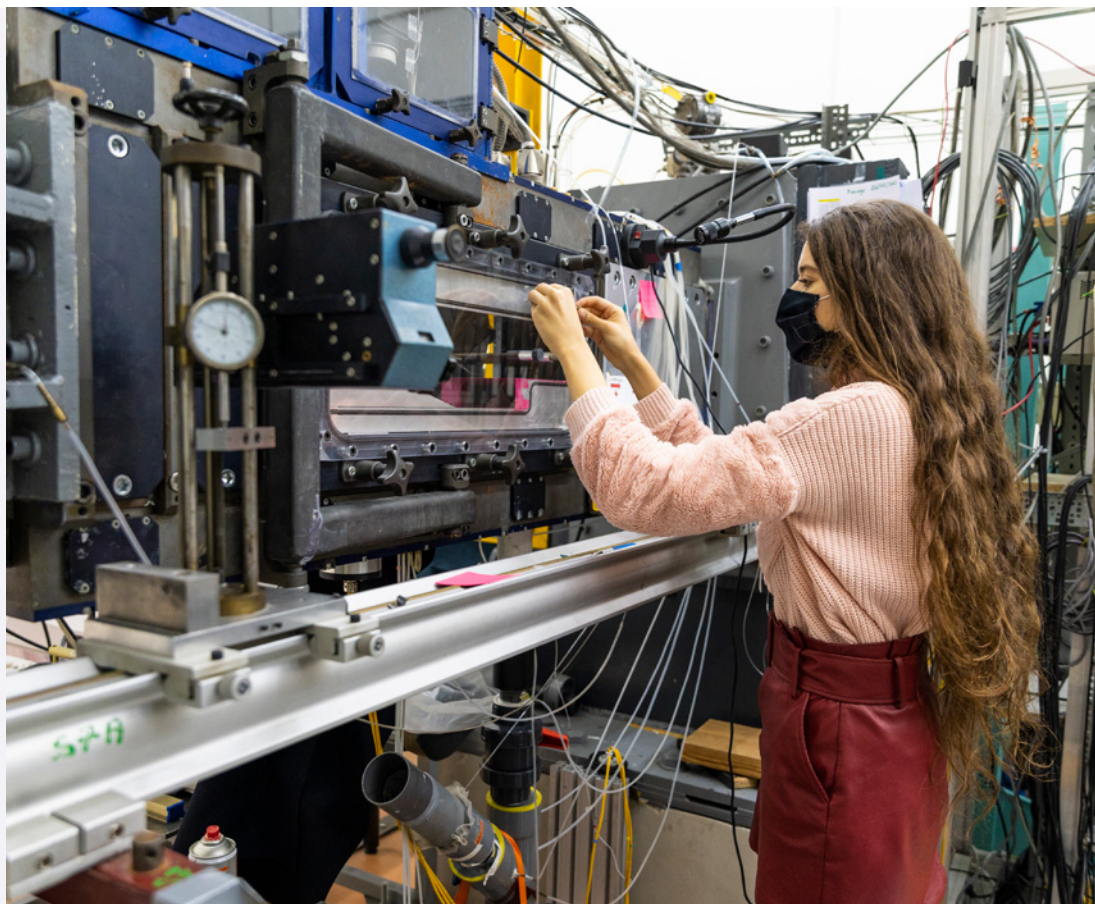
BOX 3. TESTIMONIAL FROM NICOLAS BADALASSI, UNIT DIRECTOR AT THE MESOPOLHIS LABORATORY

«In 2025, the Mission Europe for Research gave us particularly structured support. The MER provided decisive support in preparing an ERC project, including targeted methodological advice and attentive monitoring of project leaders' work. Its presence in the laboratory, particularly during the annual MESOPOLHIS days and individual meetings, has reinforced our teams' understanding of European programmes.»

The Detection Unit has identified 10 potential projects, organised at least 15 individual meetings with researchers and produced a 'Europe Fact Sheet for Units' that summarises the context, bibliometric analyses and previous submissions. Five laboratory members subscribe to thematic mailing lists, and two have taken MER training courses on the fundamentals and on setting up collaborative projects. «The MER's responsiveness and the comprehensiveness of its work facilitate the setting up and management of our projects, in a climate of trust and close collaboration,» concludes Nicolas Badalassi.

3.

Strengthening support
for research teams
- from set-up to
implementation



3.1. Rolling out collaborative practices to organise the flow of activity

In 2025, the Engineering Unit consolidated its operating methods and refined its support procedures to guarantee high-quality service in a context featuring increasing European project submissions and of projects that require significant follow-up support. The year was marked by the implementation of a reorganisation of the workload to make it more fluid, shared and adapted to the pace of projects and the requirements of the site's research teams. This has been formalised in the revised service offering.

THE ENGINEERING UNIT DRIVES CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The engineers improved user information and training by consolidating assembly tools and developing tutorials to actively contribute to the development of support processes and tools. This collective involvement drives the continuous improvement of the quality of services on offer for research teams.

The Engineering Unit also continued to harmonise its practices by gradually adopting all the rules and processes of the MER's four partner organisations and the amU subsidiary Protisvalor Méditerranée. Specific budget matrices and annotated MER models were developed during this process by incorporating the specific features of each supervisory authority and type of project to facilitate and secure arrangements and standardise management. The incentive policy (bonuses and adjustments to cut teaching duties) of the partner organisations has also been systematically integrated. These shared tools and this gradual structuring have led to more autonomy for the project engineers who now also possess a better understanding of each supervisory authority's administrative constraints which has enhanced the effectiveness of the pooling of resources.

Internal solidarity and cohesion are key to the Unit's operations so, in the event of an absence, projects are taken over by other engineers to ensure continuity of support. The weekly Unit meeting plays a central role in this dynamic through information sharing, discussions of best practices and progress reviews of current projects. This cooperation culture ensures continuous, high-quality support for all projects and also maintains the balance of teams faced with cyclical activity peaks.

The most experienced engineers have played a key role in internal training to integrate new members of the Unit - mastery of digital tools, understanding MER processes, learning the specifics of the European Commission's supervisory bodies or tools, project development (drafting, administrative, budgetary) and monitoring (contractualisation, project life cycle monitoring). For example, during the year, three new staff members joined the Unit while two left. This turnover did not however significantly impact the Unit's activity thanks to its organisation, the transfer of skills and the robustness of the processes. As regards departures and arrivals in 2025, a mentoring scheme has been set up to facilitate integration. Each new recruit is supported by a mentor who is responsible for helping them settle into their new role, facilitating access to tools and contributing to initial training.

AN ORGANISATION ADAPTED TO PEAKS IN ACTIVITY

Activity was structured to anticipate the annual peak in submissions between the end of August and the end of November. There was no summer closure which represents an exemption from the rules of certain organisations that has been accepted by their supervisory authorities. This meant the team was capable of absorbing a particularly high workload, with the number of submissions doubling for several major calls, notably those for ERC Advanced Grants (August), ERC Starting Grants, MSCA PF postdoctoral fellowships and Cluster coordination (September). The Unit also provided specific support for American researchers who arrived in the framework of the 'Safe Place for Science' programme in their applications for the ERC AdG 2025 call.

3.2. Responding to the specific requirements of coordinated projects

In 2025, the MER reinforced its support for **coordinated projects**, with **20 submissions** made during the year. Each project benefited from the support of a 'drafting engineer/project engineer' duo. This increase in activity led the Unit to adapt its internal organisation to respond effectively to the growing complexity of collaborative projects which also requires taking peaks in activity and the associated workloads into account.

THE MER'S STRATEGIC CHOICES TO FOCUS EFFORTS ON HIGHER VALUE-ADDED ACTIVITIES

Feedback from the first waves of coordinated projects in 2024 and 2025, analysis of the results and added value of the MER in 2024, and the consequent increase in projects identified by the Detection Unit led the MER to develop and refocus its service offering to concentrate on removing barriers to researchers' participation in all European programmes.

This resulted in individual projects (ERC and MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships) now benefiting from enhanced support based on collective formats (training, webinars, preparation sessions, enhanced CERClé activities) in the early and preparatory phases twinned with the offer of individual proofreading and advice as long as the complete project is submitted early enough. This workflow organisation means the scientific project engineers can support more mature individual projects and thus focus their expertise on in-depth proofreading and support for drafting coordinated collaborative projects as these are particularly demanding and also a priority objective for the MER.

Alongside this, funding from the Pluriannual Europe Action Plan (PAPE) has enabled new support activities to be launched to assist the MER, most notably including tangible funding for reductions in teaching work which gives academics the time they require to submit ERC projects or prepare collaborative projects in coordination with others. The support has also enabled aspiring coordinators or first-time applicants to obtain funding from the *Fonds Impulsion Europe* to meet with their partners, organise working meetings with their consortium and use specific outsourced services. It has also meant applicants for MSCA postdoctoral fellowships could meet their supervisors on site and develop their proposals in close collaboration with the MER and the laboratories involved. Finally, the work carried out in the framework of the CERClé has provided a range of support for applicants - from information and coaching phases to external training on project drafting and proofreading.

EXPERIMENTATION WITH ENHANCED SUPPORT FOR COORDINATION

The MER's support for collaborative projects in coordination was thoroughly reviewed and reinforced in 2025. This also involved enhanced internal collaboration within the MER between Detection Unit staff members in charge of the unit involved or who identified projects and their counterparts from the Engineering Unit, with overall support from our legal specialist.

From the early stages of a project, the MER's scientific project engineers are involved in validating the idea/project's suitability in close collaboration with the Detection Unit staff members and the researchers involved. Their support is at the interface between strategic advice and co-drafting, the aim being to transpose the specific requirements of European calls into projects in terms of scientific expectations and ambition and of transversal issues like public policy priorities, scientific and strategic structuring or networking. In this context, they also support researchers setting up projects to respond to the ANR's MRSEI call, the *Fonds Impulsion* Europe or other incentive schemes that are strategic funding levers for structuring consortia. They also provide help with organising preparatory meetings and preparing future European coordination. This upstream support helps secure networking efforts and refine project objectives and work programmes to optimise the preparation of Horizon Europe projects while also providing for external views on the project via ANR evaluations or advice from national points of contact (PCNs).

Internally, coordinated projects are monitored regularly throughout the support period, involving all MER staff involved in supporting the coordinator. This detailed and tailored monitoring makes it possible to assess a project's maturity, adapt support arrangements according to actual progress and the difficulties encountered, and suggest corrective measures. When a project enters the drafting phase, a duo made up of a drafting engineer and a project engineer is formed. These duos support researchers and academics in all aspects of the project - consortium coordination, rewriting scientific sections, work plan development, drafting of transversal, impact and implementation sections, the construction of Gantt charts, Pert, identifying KPIs/KERs and risks, developing the consortium budget and its final justifications, producing infographics and providing overall administrative, legal and financial support to partners, etc.

This new support is organised to be flexible, progressive, highly reactive and adapted to the specific timelines of collaborative projects and the coordination of international consortia. In 2025, this approach improved the quality of proposals submitted and helped secure the key stages of the process. It will be rolled out on a broad scale in 2026.

3.3. Securing negotiations and formalising project monitoring

In 2025, the MER consolidated and structured its contracting and monitoring activities, with these now fully integrated into the project life cycle. This work has become an important and integral part of our work, ensuring continuity of support from project design to implementation, while also enhancing the quality and reliability of submitted and funded projects. Right from the first year of the MER's existence, it became clear that neglecting the post-award phase (work required once negotiations have begun) would limit the commitment of site teams to taking part in European projects which would have made the MER's support work counterproductive.

RESTRUCTURED AND FULLY POOLED POST-AWARD ACTIVITIES

The creation of dedicated contractualisation and monitoring within the Engineering Unit has ring-fenced these activities and reinforced the organisation of this essential phase of the project life cycle. A weekly meeting supported by a shared dashboard ensures regular progress monitoring for contractualisations or amendments to funded projects so projects coming up against difficulties can be identified rapidly.

This area of work also plays a key structuring role in harmonising practices within the Engineering Unit. It also involves promoting the gradual appropriation of the managing organisations' financial and legal frameworks and explaining how the site's research ecosystem and constantly evolving European requirements function, to new team members in particular. In a context of evolving teams, service continuity is based on formalised procedures, peer training and strong collective solidarity. Contractualisation and project monitoring work is now carried out according to activity flows and assigned project portfolios whichever supervisory authority the staff members belong to. This clearly illustrates the MER's new level of maturity in effectively pooling its operations completely.

REINFORCING COOPERATION WITH THE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENTS OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND WITH PROTISVALOR

The engineers closely monitor projects and develop relationships of trust with the organisations' support departments with adjustments made on an ongoing basis to respond to complex requirements and situations. This form of cooperation means implementation methods can be tailored to the specific characteristics of supervisory authorities and projects to secure key project stages and facilitate the transmission of best practices. Finally, cooperation of this kind helps support European management departments in the development of their practices when required and in fully understanding European requirements.

Also, reinforcing these activities means feedback from research units in the implementation of their projects can be systematically taken into account. This constitutes a lever for the continuous improvement of our practices by promoting the integration of lessons learnt into future submissions. Historically, the financial monitoring of European projects was not within the scope of the MER and was instead carried out by the managing organisations which tended to create a risk of disconnect on these issues which could limit detailed and operational knowledge of project implementation. The fact that Engineering Unit staff members are part of the EPM network works along similar lines, grounding our actions in the realities in the field more effectively as well, of course, as reinforcing links with laboratories. This enables us to capitalise

on tangible project implementation experiences to offer future applicants advice and best practices based on proven tangible feedback.

At the same time, the Unit has maintained regular exchanges with the support services of the five organisations. Exchanges of this kind led by the Unit's engineers help secure the entire life cycles of projects.

A GUARANTEE OF A SECURE START AND HIGH-QUALITY PROJECTS

Finally, the Engineering Unit organises harmonised project launch meetings tailored to the types of projects and the requirements of the supervisory authorities. These meetings are held in the research units, at the MER, by videoconference or on the premises of the organisations, and involve MER staff and supervisory authorities. They ensure a shared understanding of the implementation modalities, reinforce the efficiency and reliability of projects from the outset, and enable the dissemination of shared best practices.



BOX 4. TESTIMONIAL: COORDINATION SUPPORT – DANIELA BANARU, MIO

I found out about a Horizon Europe call for proposals dedicated to Indo-European cooperation on the cumulative impacts of marine pollution through discussions with the MER's Detection Unit. As a specialist in food webs and contaminant transfer, I immediately recognised that this call dovetailed strongly with my own research topics which led me to quickly initiate initial contacts with potential partners.

The European marine science networking event organised by Aix-Marseille University in December 2024 in the framework of the EOREA alliance and with the support of the MER was a decisive step. Discussions at this event enabled the consortium to be expanded and, as the discussions progressed, revealed the opportunity and then my own wish to become the scientific coordinator of a major European project, the MEBSI-POLL project.

From this exploratory phase onwards, the support of the MER was structuring in nature and developed gradually, bringing together several partners with complementary skillsets. The Detection Unit played a key role in identifying the call for proposals and making the right initial contacts which facilitated meetings

that were crucial for the formation of the consortium. Then I was supported by the European thematic project manager for water and marine sciences (amU) and the Engineering Unit to structure and lead an international partnership involving 27 European and Indian stakeholders from academia, research, SMEs and civil society. The MER also helped clarify the expectations of the call, particularly through an exchange with the NCP for Cluster 6, dedicated training courses for project leaders, and in developing the work programme and constructing the European budget.

The creation and implementation of this large-scale coordination illustrates the MER's capacity to provide continuous support for complex projects despite a tight schedule (summer submission) and concurrent calls. A reinforced organisation with two engineers working in tandem helped secure my project at its various stages and clarify the roles within the consortium. Beyond the MEBSI-POLL project, this experience has been a defining moment in my career, reinforcing my ability to lead ambitious European projects and paving the way for new research and international collaboration opportunities.

4.

Equipping ourselves with tools and processes to boost our performance



4.1. Stabilising the digital working environment and promoting shared operations

A SHARED DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT TO SERVE MUTUALISATION

In 2025, MER unified its digital working environment with this challenge successfully carried out by a team from five different employing organisations (amU and its subsidiary Protisvalor, the CNRS, the Inserm, the IRD). This success means shared, secure tools are now accessible to all MER staff members, whatever their supervisory authority.

In this context, it was an essential step to set up a shared digital file management space so in autumn 2025, the team migrated all its digital content to a more stable and secure environment which was facilitated by the staff relocating to a single site. This change enabled a thorough reorganisation of shared spaces including a clarification of the tree structure, the harmonisation of files and enhanced traceability. This work was carried out in close collaboration with the digital departments and has led to a more readable and reliable working environment which is essential for service continuity and the quality of the support the MER provides to research teams.

ACHIEVING DATA RELIABILITY AND STRENGTHENING SITE-WIDE MANAGEMENT

This stabilisation of the digital environment has gone hand-in-hand with increased efforts to enhance data reliability and exploitation. The central internal table that lists all Horizon Europe projects is a strategic management tool for the MER which means consolidated indicators can be produced for organisations, institutional partners and our funders. As well their usefulness for management purposes, these data feed into analyses of site performance (success rates, positioning of units), provide key elements for research policy (governance and thematic vice-presidencies) and reinforce the strategic advice provided to research units.

In terms of the tools implemented at European level, specific practices have been put in place to enable the MER to share access to projects managed by the four partner organisations on the European Commission's Funding Portal. This means MER staff members can view and access all Horizon Europe proposals and projects involving those four organisations and thus monitor European projects whatever supervisory authority is managing them.

This organisational set-up guarantees a comprehensive transdisciplinary vision of the site's European activity and tangibly demonstrates the MER's ability to function as a centralised shared service, beyond the institutional logic specific to each of the partner organisations.

4.2. Improving shared tools and processes

In a context of mutualisation and of constantly evolving activity, the MER undertook a structuring effort to formalise and secure its operating processes in 2025. The MER's team is made up of staff members from different supervisory authorities with regular staff turnover involved so the challenge is to guarantee a shared, stable and transferable working framework, independent of the individuals working on them at the MER. In this way, the formalisation of rules and practices helps ensure continuity of service and quality support while also securing activities linked to European projects.

This work has resulted in the creation and structuring of a substantial corpus of around thirty processes that cover all of the MER's activities. These processes were collectively developed by the teams in the framework of a continuous improvement approach which means they are reviewed and adjusted based on feedback and changing requirements. The implementation of a process index facilitates the integration and continuous training of staff members and promotes the adoption of the cultures and practices of the different organisations on the site whatever their original supervisory authorities. The fact that the operating procedures and data associated with projects have been secured means this structure can ensure reliable management for the partner organisations and consolidate the shared operation of the MER in the long term.

4.3. Rolling out the MER's legal support in collaboration with the partner organisations

The support provided by the MER's legal advisor was set up thanks to Booster funding and is now a strategic pillar of research project support. Legal support is rolled out in close coordination with the partner organisations and covers all phases of a project's life cycle to secure the legal framework, harmonise best practices around a single simplified process, ensure compliance with commitments and continually optimise the conditions for exploiting results.

To enhance the clarity, consistency and simplification of this legal support, a major review was carried out in 2025 to formalise and structure the legal services offering. This common framework is applied at each stage of the projects, clarifies roles, secures processes in the long term, strengthens the interface with institutions and supervisory bodies responsible for commercialisation, and anticipates commercialisation challenges with greater granularity.

This work has resulted in a service offering that is structured around the following stages:

- During the **pre-set-up phase**, support is provided to the scientific teams and the legal specialist carries out an inventory of existing intellectual property assets so points requiring vigilance, protection issues and the structuring of collaborations can be anticipated upstream.

- During the **set-up phase**, the legal specialist is responsible for drafting and negotiating preliminary agreements (NDAs, LoUs) to provide legal security for partnerships and also supports the integration of intellectual property and commercialisation aspects into project proposals.
- **Contractualisation** of course requires sustained legal expertise - drafting and negotiating consortium agreements, formalising background information, drafting the agreements required for project rollout, and liaising with the supervisory authorities, particularly on data protection issues. Lump sum financing arrangements have also been incorporated into contractual practices.
- The legal specialist oversees the **project implementation** stage which includes amendments, extensions and additional documents. At the end of the project, she supports the teams for their commercialisation strategy in collaboration with the partner organisations.

Legal support is intended to be a tool for anticipation and optimisation as well as a form of security measure and is now fully integrated into the dynamics of project development, implementation and promotion. This clarified scope coupled with enhanced and structured support and a more comprehensive legal service offering continually enhances the effectiveness and visibility of this system which in turn helps improve the quality and impact of projects led by the MER.

4.4. Implementing the site's incentive policy to encourage European projects

A HARMONISED INCENTIVE POLICY ACROSS THE AIX-MARSEILLE SITE

2025 marked a milestone in the successful dissemination of the site's incentive policy. In a context of pooling resources between the four MER organisations with heterogeneous practices, the challenge was to formalise a clear, coherent and genuinely incentive-based framework for all teaching and research staff members on the Aix-Marseille site. National research organisations have their own levers but the MER's shared operational system has enabled Aix-Marseille University to develop its own policy in line with national frameworks to benefit the whole site in terms of fairness and efficiency. The key innovations include the alignment of bonuses with best practices, and service adjustments extended to all teaching and research staff.

THE MER'S STEERING SUPPORT FOR ACADEMICS

The MER played a central role in updating the incentive policy, steering the revision of procedures and coordinating exchanges with the amU's central services, components and also the partner organisations' supervisory authorities. The new arrangements were approved at the end of 2024 for implementation from 2025 and are now based on two complementary components, namely bonuses and adjustments to reduce teaching duties. The 'bonuses' component has been revised, integrated into the salaries of academics, and aligned with CNRS practices to reinforce financial recognition for academics' commitment to European projects. Service adjustments have been expanded to include the site's teaching and research

staff, regardless of their supervisory authority, in the development and implementation of European projects, thereby reinforcing the scheme's incentive nature at the inter-institutional level. The MER carries out overall monitoring of these schemes which ensures the harmonised application of the rules and smooth coordination between the different site stakeholders. Sufficient advance notice is given to enable departments to organise the teaching loads of their academics.

A STRUCTURING LEVER FOR THE SITE'S EUROPEAN ATTRACTIVENESS

This harmonised incentive policy helps make European projects more attractive and influences the careers of academics to make their European commitment more effective and sustainable. These measures are fully in line with current national policies and also dovetail with the MESRE's work on HR levers in European projects, particularly following on from the *Mobilisons Horizon Europe* conference, and with the creation of a dedicated national working group on human resources and the promotion of European careers. This forward-looking, long-term work is a key strategic lever for reinforcing the Aix-Marseille site's participation in upcoming European Framework Programmes.



BOX 5. KEY FIGURES - COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION OF THE MER'S WORK



- 2400 SUBSCRIBERS ON LINKEDIN
- 1 400 NEW LINKEDIN SUBSCRIBERS IN 2025



- 83 PUBLICATIONS AND 150,000 PRINTS
- 12,000 WEBSITE VISITS IN 2025
- 21,064 PAGE VIEWS



- 25 EVENTS - TRAINING SESSIONS, WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES/SYMPOSIUMS

Conclusion

Horizon 2026 - assessing the impact and reinforcing the model

After two years of rollout, the Mission Europe for Research has established itself as a recognised key player in the Aix-Marseille site's European strategy. It is based on a unique shared model and enables consistent operational coordination between national guidelines, European requirements and institutional strategies, while also driving real momentum for the site.

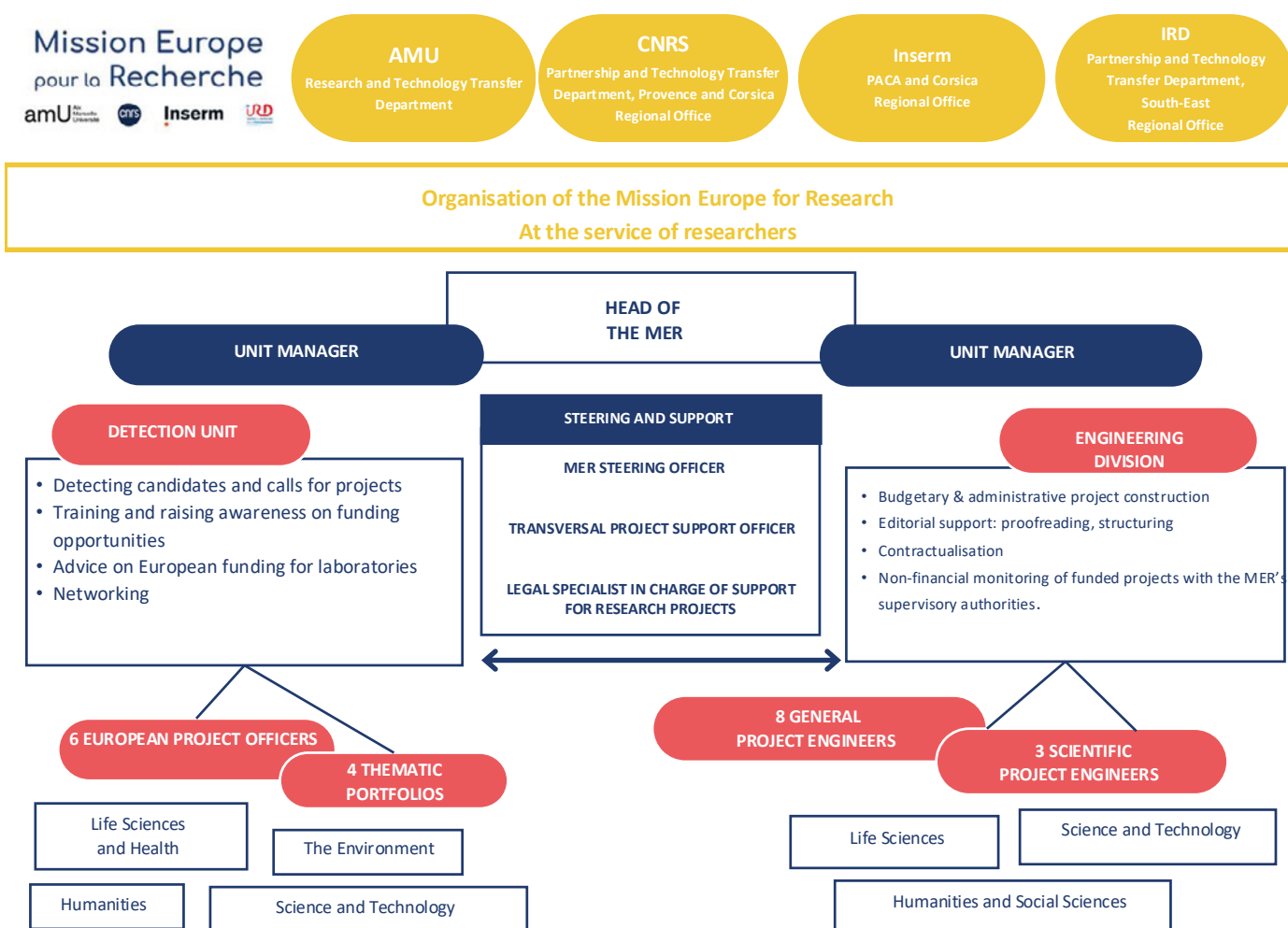
In record time the MER has combined together the strengths of the site's organisations, operated in a shared mode and helped strengthen the clarity, consistency and effectiveness of support for research teams and European projects. 2025 featured a decisive ramp-up with the rapid and effective structuring of support services - comprehensive support for complex calls for projects (project engineer/drafting engineer duos, legal expertise on consortia) and enhanced proactivity in identifying opportunities.

2026 thus marks the start of a decisive phase of evaluation and projection. A satisfaction survey will be launched to assess the impact of the actions carried out objectively and adjust the services offered to the site's requirements. This approach is fully in line with the preparation of the second phase of the ASDESR Booster – France 2030 project which will consolidate the skills and human resources dedicated to Europe in the long term.

At a time of national thought and work on HR with the future FP10 Framework Programme on its way, the MER is a strategic tool for positioning Aix-Marseille as a benchmark site capable of leading a collective European ambition that is clear and sustainable over time.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Diagram of the MER's organisation serving researchers and academics



Appendix 2. Visual representation of the Mission Europe for Research's service offering

Coordinated collaborative projects

Full offer 6 months before a deadline:

- Targeting the call
- Coordinator training
- Consortium coordination
- Co-drafting and proofreading
- Enhanced budget security
- *For ERC calls: support in conjunction with SATT / CNRS Innovation.*

1 month before the deadline: Administrative and financial arrangements. *Please note the administrative and financial complexities*

ERC projects with CERCIe

Complete offer 6 months before the deadline:

- Drafting training
- Proofreading by an expert
- Oral preparation
- Guide and annotated models
- Networking for successful applicants

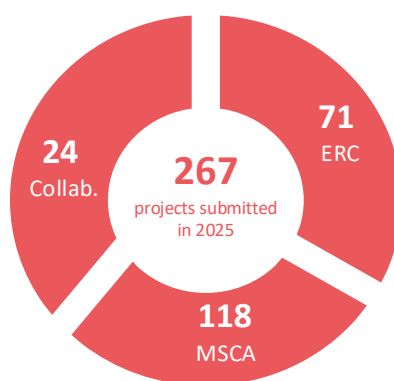
1 month before the deadline: Administrative and financial arrangements.
Please note the administrative and financial complexities

MSCA PF projects

Complete offer before 1 July:

- Welcoming site candidates
- Proofreading for the project
- Benefiting from the *Fond Impulsion Europe*
- Infodays
- Guide and annotated models

After 1 July: Administrative and financial arrangements and Q&A sessions
Please note the deadlines for eligibility checks.



Plan ahead for your submission to benefit from the MER's comprehensive support!

Whether you are a coordinator or a partner, as soon as you decide to take part in a European project, please contact us to benefit from support throughout the project application process.

Mission Europe
pour la Recherche

amU Université de
Montpellier CITS Inserm IRD

Each unit has a
designated contact person!

Contact us:
detection@mission-europe-recherche.fr

Find our full range of services on our [website](#).

NB: It is essential to meet deadlines in order to benefit from MER support.

Researchers are encouraged to plan ahead in order to benefit from the support. Otherwise, depending on the type of project, support may not be possible.

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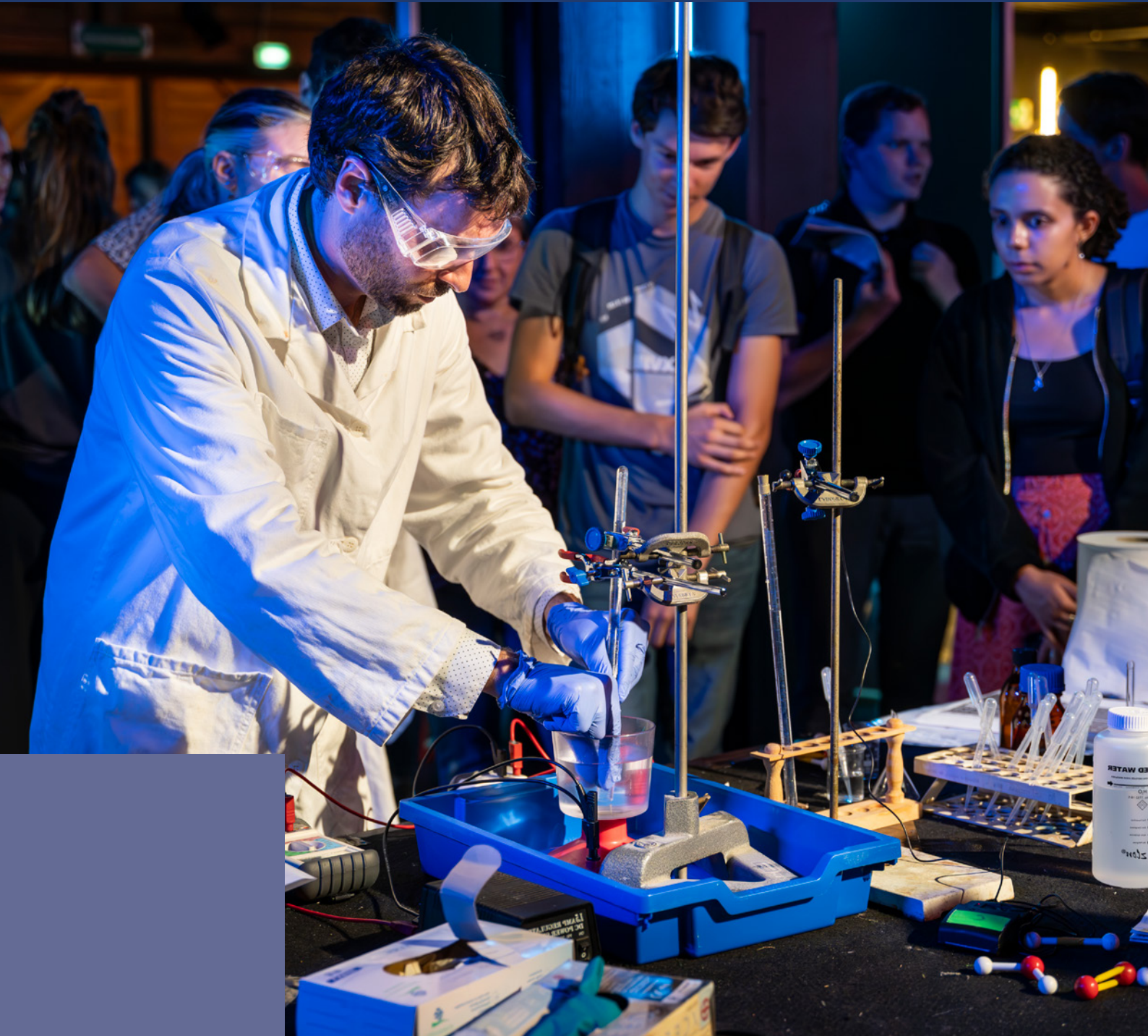
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Activity Report

2025