



Press Release 2014 – Horizon 2020 Funding

--for immediate release--

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European Science Will Not Remain Competitive Without Adequate Funding!

In 2013, nine out of twelve Nobel Laureates were citizens of the United States. Of those, only five were actually born there, with the remainder being naturalized citizens. In parallel, US Universities dominate the top-ten (and even top-fifty) positions of all reputable international University rankings. Two of the major driving forces for this have been a strong research funding system (including large University-provided startups for junior faculty establishing their first research groups), as well as an environment that welcomes the best minds regardless of their country of origin, causing a flood of talent to the United States.

Recent developments in European funding of research, and in particular the formation of the European Research Council (ERC) in 2007 set to change this. Suddenly, it was no longer immediately obvious that the United States was necessarily the best place to do research. Generous funding schemes for leading European researchers meant that we could not only retain some of the top scholars in the world in Europe, but also attract them to Europe to do research. For example, this year alone, three recipients of ERC Advanced Grants were also awarded Nobel Prizes¹, and one of the youngest Nobel Laureates in Physics, Prof. Konstantin Novoselov, was also holder of an ERC Starting Grant at the time².

The Young Academy of Europe (<http://www.yacadeuro.org>) is an international, non-governmental dynamic group of top European young researchers with outspoken views about science and science policy. It was founded by scientists who all held substantial funds from the European Research Council, and has recently extended membership also to recipients of other national prestigious grants and fellowships. YAE members also benefit from substantial international experience in different research environments, testifying to the need for programs to provide competitive conditions and sufficient perspectives for the next generation of scientists setting up new labs with innovative methods.

¹ http://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/press_release/files/Nobel_Prize_Medicine_2014.pdf, also http://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/press_release/files/ERC_Press_release_Nobel_Prize_Economics2014.pdf

² http://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/press_release/files/erc_pr_2010_nobel_prize_novoselov_0.pdf



To maintain international competitiveness at a time when for instance China, Brazil, Korea, Japan, India and the US are massively investing in R&D, we believe it is crucial that the EU does not fall short of the (so far incomplete) implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, with its goal to transform Europe into “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world”. We applaud President Juncker’s commitment to improving Europe’s economic situation. However, we would like to point out that, as it is, the €70.2 billion total dedicated to Horizon 2020 only constitutes 8% of the total Multiannual Financial Framework budget. Excellent young scientists in particular are already feeling the effects in terms of reduced funding opportunities and increasingly bleak career perspectives. Now the Commission is planning to divert a further €2.7 billion from €28 billion Horizon 2020 the budget for the years 2015-2017 (almost 10%). If these plans were to be realized, the results would be disastrous for in particular young scientists in the short term, and for European competitiveness in Research and Innovation in the long term. Therefore, we urge the Commission to protect the Horizon 2020 research budget, and reinforce its commitment to fulfilling the goals of the Lisbon Treaty.