



Press Release No. 2012-2
-for immediate release-

November 16, 2012

European Scientists Hand Over Petition to the EU Presidents

The online petition to protect the EU research budget has made a first impact: after counting more than 130,000 signatories on www.no-cuts-on-research.eu as of November 15, a handover of the petition to the Presidents of the European Council, the Commission and the Parliament took place yesterday afternoon in Brussels. This petition, led by the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE) with support from the Young Academy of Europe (YAE), was in response to the open letter from more than 40 Nobel laureates and several Fields medallists concerning the protection of the EU research budget. Numerous European media outlets have reported on the open letter, inducing the German Federal Research Minister, Anette Schavan, to publish a statement in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

Yesterday afternoon, the President of the Initiative for Science in Europe, Maria Leptin, joined by Nobel laureates Sir Tim Hunt and Jules Hoffmann as well as the President of the European Research Council, Helga Nowotny, the YAE Secretary Leif Schröder and ISE Executive Coordinator Wolfgang Eppenschwandtner met with President Herman Van Rompuy, President José Manuel Barroso and President Martin Schulz to hand over the petition. Therein, the signatories request to protect the proposed € 80 bn budget of the research program Horizon 2020 from any cuts.

The EU Presidents expressed their support for significant research funding but also emphasized that the upcoming negotiations will be very difficult. President Van Rompuy explained that his current budget draft 'is along the spirit of the Commission's proposal' and that it would protect Horizon 2020 from disproportionate cuts. However, he pointed out, the problem was convincing the national governments. The German government has already declared its intent to negotiate in favour of a strong research budget in Brussels on November 22/23. In line with this, the Swedish government named research as an EU top priority and announced on October 30 they would not support any budget 'made for the fifties' that would make cuts to research. Along these lines, President Van Rompuy



recommended that YAE and the ISE further pursue communication with EU member states who have announced their intent to veto the recently presented compromises.

The same aspect was also brought up in the meeting with President Barroso who stated that in particular the British Government should realize how much the UK research system benefits from EU funding. He also shared the concern that the budget for Horizon 2020 is one of the candidates that might be neglected once certain alliances form and package deals with other priorities are brought to the table.

All three Presidents realized how serious the concerns of the scientific community are at this time, and what it means when 130,000 people sign such a petition – an unprecedented movement, as researchers rarely lobby for public funding. There was an agreement on the importance of continued and improved communication of the benefits of publicly funded research to society and that today's 'grand challenges' can only be tackled with a strong European research program.

Later in the day, YAE Secretary Schröder also spoke to the leader of the German opposition in Parliament and former Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier. He also agreed that Horizon 2020 is at particular risk during negotiations and explained that the social democrats will continue to put pressure to the government to achieve a future-oriented EU budget for 2014-20.

The Young Academy of Europe will continue to appeal to the Head of States and Governments to realize the outstanding importance of the Horizon 2020 budget for securing economic, social and intellectual prosperity in Europe.

Official coverage can be found at:

European Commission

Photos: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/photo/photoByReportageNews.cfm?rid=8437&sitelang=en>

Video: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?sitelang=en&ref=89896>

European Parliament

Videos:

Meeting: <http://audiovisual.europarl.europa.eu/AssetDetail.aspx?g=98fa62ab-26a7-43cf-b90e-8c0e7317f386>

Press conference: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/player/streaming.cfm?type=ebplus&sid=215511>



European Council

Photos:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/council/photographic-](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/council/photographic-library?command=PIC&pic=2&bid=61&lang=e&rubrique=4373&dateEvent=15/11/2012&id=&picid=54e2b048-b8e8-4cd8-a154-1c20b706394b)

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Link to the ERC press release

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

Link to the Commission press release

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1218_en.htm

About the YAE:

The Young Academy of Europe (YAE, www.yacadeuro.org) is an international, non-governmental dynamic group of top European young scientists with outspoken views about science and science policy. YAE was founded by scientists all of whom have received substantial funding through the European Research Council (ERC) in terms of ERC Starting Grants under the motto “Supporting the next generation of research leaders in Europe”. The YAE provides input and feedback on aspects of doing science in Europe, with all its facets, from a “younger” perspective and supports other young scientists in Europe in their further development and in thinking strategically about the future of their own discipline. It maintains a close relationship with the Academia Europaea and creates and fosters a network of top young researchers across the disciplines in Europe.