



Press release

-for immediate publication-

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Young Academy of Europe emphasises importance of sustainable research funding in Europe

By endorsing the open letter from numerous Nobel Laureates concerning the upcoming negotiations of the European Union budget 2014-20, the members of the Young Academy of Europe (YAE) wish to express their serious concerns regarding imminent cuts to the Horizon 2020 research funding programme and the related negative long-term consequences for securing economic, social and intellectual prosperity.

We consider the budget of Eur 79.3 bn proposed for Horizon 2020 by the Commission (cf. MEMO/11/848) to be crucial for Europe to secure its place in the world. Developing sustainable growth requires sufficient support for science and innovation. This investment is a key factor that enables Europe to exit from the current economic crisis and for tackling pressing societal challenges. The impact assessment report concerning research and innovation funding (cf. document SEC(2011) 1428 final) recognizes that it is critically important to generate breakthrough technologies and translate them into new products, processes and services for boosting productivity and growth.

These aims are jeopardized since individual actions by Member States are fragmented and often intrinsically weaker. This is especially true when coordinated European activities are not being upheld financially. Therefore, restructuring European research and innovation activities to achieve the necessary impact in a sufficiently broad range of technologies must be implemented by the EU in terms of collaborative research and mobility initiatives.

The expressed aim of the twelve year old Lisbon Strategy to transform Europe into “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” can only be reached by attracting leading scientists willing to perform research in an environment that fosters both curiosity-driven and challenge-driven research. Competition for the best scientists calls for completion of the European Research Area (ERA) in order to create a



unified landscape for research and innovation. This requires a substantial long-term financial commitment.

In particular, implementation of the European Research Council (ERC) in 2007 represents a key tool for providing the required infrastructure. With its proposed 2014-20 budget of Eur 13.3 bn, the ERC will attract top scientists and strengthen the scientific base making seminal contributions to address societal challenges. It would be counterproductive to reduce funding for this instrument now, when it has shown initial success in improving the global perception of research in Europe. Successful implementation of the ERA and the ability to attract and keep the best scientists is put at risk by reducing the financial commitment, thus undermining the achievements of previous programmes.

Investments in the ERC and many other instruments within Horizon 2020 will pay off after more than a decade. Although this programme represents less than 8% of the overall EU budget of Eur 1,025 bn, it will translate into disproportionately high downstream economic and competitive impact. It is estimated in the above mentioned documents that this investment will generate an increase of ca. 1% of GDP by 2030.

In representing the next generation of European scientists, we wish to point out that cutting the research and innovation budget will seriously endanger Europe's ability to stimulate innovation and growth. As ERC funded researchers we cannot emphasize enough the worldwide esteem for this instrument. YAE members have benefited from substantial international experience in different research environments and can testify to the need for programmes such as the ERC in order to provide competitive conditions and sufficient perspectives for the next generation of scientists.

We therefore appeal to the political decision makers to realize the critical importance of the Horizon 2020 budget and to adopt the budget proposed by the Commission in full. Otherwise, there will be dramatic consequences and Europe's standing within the long term will be jeopardized. Can Europe afford to risk losing a generation of talented scientists when science is of such essential importance for the future?



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.