

Press release: AE comment on the proposal of the President of the European Commission for a significant change of policy and budget for the Horizon 2020 support program for research and innovation.

Statement from the Board of Trustees of the Academia Europaea

3 December 2014 - London and Utrecht

Text of a letter sent to the;

President of the European Commission

President of the European Council

President of the European Parliament

Commissioner for Research and Innovation of the European Commission

Director General of the Directorate for Research and Innovation of the European Commission

Text reads

As President of the Academia Europaea, I am charged to write to you, specifically to express our collective concerns at the potential negative impacts of the recently mooted change in policy of the new Commission with respect to future funding for research and innovation under Horizon 2020.

Horizon 2020 has been recognized and accepted widely by the European research and academic community, as a major positive development in European research support policy. The agreement of both the Member States and the European Parliament for the structure, themes and budget of H2020, marked a significant vote of confidence in the strength of European creativity and excellence in all aspects of science, technology, training and intellectual scholarship. These are tangible benefits that are of global significance and contribute in a substantial and real way to the “future proofing” of Europe’s capacity in our economic, technological and collective social security.

H2020, as presently structured and with the agreed budgetary envelope, builds on the very many years of previous frameworks and on the immense investment (including through matched investments by member states themselves) in our collective research and technological capacity, including the essential development of our European human capital resources. These must be continued if Europe is to emerge from the current financial environment into a strengthened and more secure future. Short-term changes of direction are almost always followed by longer-term failures.

It is our strong view, that any weakening of the EU RTD budget may put at risk the very substantive collective added value that the already sunk investments in European research actions have delivered. There is also a genuine risk of

Academia Europaea

4th Floor, 21 Albemarle Street
London W1S 4HS
Tel: +44 (0) 207 495 3717
Fax: +44 (0) 207 629 5442
Email: execsec@acadeuro.org
www.ae-info.org

President: Professor Sierd Cloetingh
Vice President: Professor Anne Buttimer
Treasurer: Professor Sir Roger Elliott
Executive Secretary: Dr David Coates

General enquiries: admin@acadeuro.org
Registered at Companies House: 7028223
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long-term damage to the global excellence that the ERC mechanism now has and is currently enabling. This is of special concern. Europe is in a long-term fight to deliver the as yet unforeseen technological developments that will make possible the future breakthroughs in critical areas such as Energy, Medicine, Food security and many similar fields – all essential to Europe’s long-term survival in a global, competitive and essentially hostile world. The ERC, as the cradle of support of future talent and leaders of research excellence in Europe, has to be safeguarded by all means, otherwise Europe will lose the edge and its capacity to deliver these major scientific and technological breakthroughs that it badly needs. One can already witness remarkable transformative effects of the pan-European competition that the ERC represents, both at the institutional and at the personal level. These make Europe much fitter for development. We are aware that other similarly strong and unequivocal views have recently been expressed by similar organisations as Academia Europaea and we wholeheartedly add our Academy voice to these messages.

The Academia Europaea, with a membership of over 3000 high-level researchers and scholars, jointly with the closely associated Young Academy of Europe, now strongly urge the new Commission to reflect with great care on the essential need for continuing unchanged the agreed European level RTD policy effort.

Of course we would accept and encourage the Commission on the need for a strategic mid-term evaluation of H2020 and open discussions on any possible changes that might be recommended at that time. But a *per force* and sudden change at the outset will be disruptive and destabilising to much of the RTD community.

Therefore, and on behalf of the Trustees and members of the Academia Europaea, I hope that our concerns will be read with due consideration.

Yours sincerely



Sierd Cloetingh, Professor

President of the Academia Europaea
Utrecht

The Academia Europaea (AE) was formed in 1988. It is a not-for-profit Charitable Trust, acting as the European Academy of Sciences, Humanities and Letters. The AE has an elected membership of over 3000 leading European based researchers and scholars of the highest calibre. The membership is drawn from the academic community of the continent of Europe and is not limited to the member states of the European Union. The AE operates from a London corporate HQ and three regional European Knowledge Hubs – Wroclaw (Poland), Barcelona (Spain) and Bergen (Norway).

Information about the AE can be accessed via www.ae-info.org

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