

Strengthening European Research: Funding Boost Needed to Guarantee Sustainability

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Decisions on the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 and Recovery Plan are unfolding in a context of an unprecedented crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting socio-economic crisis, has exacerbated structural problems across the EU. In the wake of the pandemic, it is apparent that the lack of in-depth knowledge in areas such as health and socioeconomics have impaired Europe's capacity to anticipate and respond to the crisis.

The whole spectrum of research (fundamental and applied) is crucial to understand the causes and interdependencies of societal challenges. Research is key in opening up avenues for solutions only possible thanks to science-generated knowledge. Insufficient investments in public research over the past decades, both at the national and EU levels, have led to major drawbacks across the European Research Area.

The European Commission has set high political ambitions to address European and global challenges, and lead the transition to sustainable and resilient societies. Nevertheless, the budget proposal on 27 May 2020 for a EU long term budget for 2021-2027 fails to allow for scientific knowledge to contribute in achieving these goals.

Science Europe acknowledges the difficulties of various aspects in the negotiations. Yet, it is adamant that scientific research deserves more attention.

Therefore, Science Europe calls on the EU institutions and Member States to:

- Provide strong political and financial support to develop the necessary knowledge and technologies required to meet EU goals. Science Europe supports the position of the European Parliament, issued on 14 November 2018, which called for €120 billion to be allocated to Horizon Europe, the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation;
- Enhance support to researcher-driven excellent research (European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions) and to state-of-the-art research infrastructures, as they generate breakthrough science as well as a new generation of top-scientists. These programmes are critical if Europe wants to be globally competitive;
- Reconsider the proposed allocations for the Next Generation Recovery Fund, the budget planned under the MFF for health, climate, and related schemes, and for the European Innovation Council (EIC). Instruments that are not directly targeted by Next Generation EU may face the threat of a decreased funding, thereby seriously damaging the Excellent Science Pillar of Horizon Europe;

- Funding for European research should be provided equitably throughout the duration of the next 2021-2027 MFF. Funds earmarked for research through Next Generation EU will be allocated by 2024. It is essential that substantial funding for all research programmes, and especially the Excellent Science pillar, is provided for the entire duration of the programmes;
- Ensure policy coherence across policy areas. The contribution of research should be embedded in the definition and implementation of sectoral policies.

These are key points for EU leaders to take into consideration when discussing the budget for the 2021-2027. Our future depends on the capacity to act together, caring for the knowledge that we need to better develop our sustainable future. The objective to build societal resilience implies the responsibility for new generations in building sustainable frameworks for the success of European research systems.

Science Europe is the organisation representing major public organisations that fund or perform excellent, ground-breaking research in Europe. It brings together the expertise of some of the largest and most respected European research organisations to jointly push the frontiers of how scientific research is produced and delivers benefits to society.

Our 36 members play a fundamental role in implementing the European Research Area at the national level. Indeed, they manage a large variety of national and international funding programmes, from bottom-up schemes to mission-oriented research. They collectively invest €18 billion in 27 countries each year. Furthermore, they actively work, within Science Europe, to increase European research collaboration.