

Thursday, 29 September 2022

Budget for Horizon Europe 2023

To: Your Excellency Ambassador Hrdá, Head of the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union (COREPER II)
Your Excellency Ambassador Zajíček, Deputy Head of the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union (COREPER I)
Ms Vlčková, National Attachée for Research and Space to the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union
Ms Hálová Perglová, National Attachée for Science and Research to the Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the European Union

Cc: Ms Gabriel, EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
Ms Rouch, Head of Commissioner Gabriel's cabinet
Ms Ratso, Acting Director-General for Research and Innovation
Mr Buşoi, Chair of the European Parliament ITRE Committee
Mr Krasnodebski, Mr Petersen, Ms Toia, Ms Gálvez Muñoz, Co-chairs of the European Parliament ITRE Committee
Mr Ehler, Coordinator of the European Parliament ITRE Committee
Mr Andresen, Member of the European Parliament ITRE Committee

Multiple global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, and generation-spanning challenges such as climate change are currently putting a heavy strain on public budgets all over the world. Financial resources are not unlimited and have to be carefully distributed between a multitude of burning issues, making it necessary to prioritise.

The rapid development of vaccines against COVID-19 has proven what joining forces and channelling resources can achieve. It has also shown that continuous, far-sighted investment in fundamental research as well as in close-to-market innovation is of paramount importance for having the right tools at hand when they are most urgently needed. It allows us to act swiftly and deal better with unforeseen adversities. While scientific discoveries are no panacea, they are an integral part of the solution. Without science-based evidence and new developments, we will not be able to address many of the challenges the world is facing.

Against this backdrop, we are deeply concerned about the substantial and disproportionate cuts to the 2023 budget of Horizon Europe as proposed by the Council in July 2022¹. The cuts amount to over €663 million from Horizon Europe, heavily impacting core programmes and initiatives that are key for helping the European Union to deal with the current and future crises. They put at risk Europe's capability to act, and they create great uncertainty for European researchers and innovators whose engagement is vital at a time when we so desperately need to address these challenges.

Moreover, the proposed cuts come while Europe's competitors are ramping up their investments in key sectors like semiconductors and climate change adaptation. For instance, earlier this year, the United States adopted the Inflation Reduction Act and the Chips and Science Act. The latter increases research and science spending by over \$80 billion over the baseline². The National Natural Science Foundation of China saw an increase in their funding budget by 6.8% this year³.

¹ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11075-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/08/09/fact-sheet-chips-and-science-act-will-lower-costs-create-jobs-strengthen-supply-chains-and-counter-china/>

³ https://english.www.gov.cn/news/topnews/202203/25/content_WS623d8d30c6d02e5335328459.html

It's not just numbers...

The proposed budget cuts will severely hit programmes such as the **ERC** which have supported researchers working on innovative solutions to help farmers **optimise fertilizer use**⁴ or develop new catalysts to create **fossil-free sustainable fuels and plastics**⁵. The ERC was praised by Ursula von der Leyen for supporting Uğur Şahin in contributing to the **development of COVID-19 vaccines**⁶.

The **Marie Skłodowska-Curie programme** has supported **Ukrainian researchers** to continue their work in the EU⁷. The proposed cuts amount to more than has been allocated to supporting these talents.

Reducing European spending for research and innovation is in stark contrast with the political priorities agreed in the trilogue between the Commission, the Parliament and the Council. It will not only jeopardise the European Union's global competitiveness and entice our bright minds to seek more favourable conditions outside Europe but also send the wrong signal at the wrong time and deter private investment.

We therefore urge the EU Member States to reconsider the proposed budget cuts for these vital European funding schemes, which are already heavily oversubscribed. A financially well-equipped Horizon Europe is key to addressing the current and future challenges all European citizens are facing and to help Europe secure its global competitiveness.



University Alliance Stockholm Trio

⁴ <https://erc.europa.eu/projects-figures/stories/new-app-tells-farmers-how-much-fertiliser-their-crops-need>

⁵ <https://www.dtu.dk/english/news/all-news/nyhed?id=076261c8-3c6f-4633-a731-67dbab66a50c>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_21_2322

⁷ <https://marie-skłodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-launches-scheme-to-support-displaced-scientists-from-ukraine>