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Strasbourg: 25 August 2020

Mr David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament
Members of the Committee for Industry, Research and Energy

[letter sent by email on 25 August 2020]

Dear President Sassoli, Dear Members of the ITRE Committee,

With this letter, we would like to bring to your attention important aspects of the recent EU Council decision to underfund the European Research Framework Programme, Horizon Europe. We consider this decision short-sighted and we are very concerned about its impact on European society, economy, and competitiveness.

As you well know, the budget approved for Horizon Europe amounts to 75.9 Bn EUR, 37% less than the proposal of the European Parliament, and 20% than the proposal of the European Commission.

The EU Council also decided to add 5 Bn EUR from the "Next Generation EU" (NGEU) fund to provide further support to the European Innovation Council within Horizon Europe. The consequence of this decision is to deplete the share of funds in the other two pillars, and in particular in pillar I.

According to our calculations¹, if the share of the budget allocated to ERC and MSCA is not increased substantially, the two programmes will receive approximately the same funding as in the last year of Horizon 2020. As a comparison, consider that when we passed from FP7 to H2020, the ERC budget was almost doubled and the MSCA budget was increased by approximately 50%. This is a huge difference!

Considering the fundamental contribution of pillar I programmes to sustain knowledge creation and to spark innovation in Europe, we worry that it will have negative consequences on the long term. Underfunding pillar I is also in stark contrast to what the EU Council conclusive document claims: "There is a need to reinforce and extend the excellence of the Union's science and

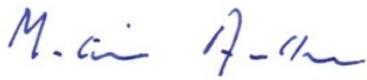
¹ In our calculations, we have considered that the UK used to benefit from 13.59% of the framework programme budget. The last year of funding for the ERC within H2020 and the successive cut from the Juncker's plan was 12.9 Bn EUR. The average ERC budget in HE will be 13 Bn EUR.

innovation base. The effort in research, development and innovation will therefore be based on excellence." We don't think that Europe will ever reinforce and extend excellence if the EU Council's decision is not revised in its basic assumptions and structure.

Therefore, we kindly ask you to consider amending the EU Council proposal along the following lines:

1. Increase the share of the budget allocated to ERC and MSCA respectively to 19% and 8.5% (from 17.11% and 7.23%);
2. Allocate a fair share of the NGEU to ERC and MSCA;
3. Earmark funds for research from other parts of the budget; in particular, dictate that at least 5% of structural funds are funneled into the research system.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Martin Andler

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About ISE

ISE represents major European Learned Societies and Research Organizations in Europe operating within different disciplines and across sectors. Active in the policy debate at the European level, ISE has been instrumental in promoting disruptive excellence-based funding programmes for scientific research such as the ERC.

Website: <https://initiative-se.eu>; Twitter: [@ISE_news](https://twitter.com/ISE_news)