

## **PRESS CONFERENCE: Impact of COVID-19 and budget cuts on the next generation of EU Researchers**

### Written statement from the Chair of Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA)

Dear Distinguished guest,

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak here. Today, I am here representing the Marie Curie Alumni Association with nearly 17000 members across 143 different countries. As a representative of researchers from all career stages and diverse backgrounds, I would like to focus on five different aspects impacted by the proposed budget cut in Horizon Europe.

First, let us focus on the proposed amount of the budget.

Looking at the absolute number one might feel that more money compared to previous years is being provided for research and innovation. However, in reality, looking at the growing demand and supply ratio in the current times, the budget is actually not enough. In fact, the past budget was not enough to mitigate climate change, it was not enough to prepare Europe for health care challenges. Added to that, the new reality posed by the pandemic, the need for new knowledge, new technology and new ways of doing things are greater than ever. To meet this need, we must invest the maximum possible amount for research & innovation.

Secondly, the connection to wider society.

Over the past 20 years, more than 140,000 researchers [1] have benefited from programs like MSCA. Taking a focused look at the societal impact of MSCA, it is clear that the beneficiaries of these programs have become knowledge leaders, top researchers and excellent innovators to provide our society with novel and much needed solutions for the challenges we face in our daily lives. We still have many more challenges ahead of us including pandemic, climate change and the fourth industrial revolution. Considering this, Europe's success lies in the hands of a growing research workforce.

Thirdly, let us focus on jobs.

How research funding, and therefore research and innovation impact industry to create business and new jobs are not always clearly visible and not always clearly communicated within the mass media. Between 2014 and 2018, MSCA supported over 2600 companies supporting 7500 jobs, among them over 1100 companies are small and medium enterprises (SMEs) [1]. Now, proposed 25% budget cut in the MSCA program will mean 2000 jobs may not exist in next year.

Fourth, Gender Equity. With targeted support, the male female ratio is 60:40 within MSCA. Not only that, 47% of research coordinators are female, much better than the 33% in other Horizon 2020 programs.

Finally, let us talk about diplomacy.

All Inclusiveness is a core value of the MSCA program. With the support of MSCA, talents can come from all over the world to work together with the European researcher to find solutions to our problem. If we learn one thing from the pandemic, this working together of world scientists is key to survival. Across the border it creates lasting relationships and a platform for diplomacy. And I am sure we can all agree diplomacy, research and innovation is a much better way of solving problems.

Keeping all these aspects in mind, I would strongly request all of you that you raise your voice and appeal to policymakers that please do not reduce our budget, fund us and let us do what we do best - find solutions to our problems.

Thank you very much.

Best Regards,

Dr. Mostafa Moonir Shawrav  
Chair  
Marie Curie Alumni Association

Reference:

[1] MARIE SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE ACTIONS DRIVING INNOVATION, CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/sites/mariecurie2/files/msca-driving-innovation-cultivating-excellence\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/sites/mariecurie2/files/msca-driving-innovation-cultivating-excellence_en.pdf)

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