

Dear Colleagues,

3 June, 2005

I write in my capacity as Chair of the European Research Advisory Board (EURAB), an independent body advising the European Commission. Its 45 members coming from academia and industry, consider it of utmost importance at this crucial moment in time to raise public and political awareness in the EU member states for the need to actively support the proposal of the European Commission for a significant increase in the budget for the 7th Framework Programme.

In a recent recommendation (see attachment) EURAB articulated the arguments that underpin the necessity for a substantial budgetary increase for research. If Europe seeks to be an effective player in world class science and seeks to realize the benefits of new discoveries for innovation and the well-being of European societies, a significant budgetary increase is required.

We are convinced that national governments need to maintain their commitment to research and innovation at national level, and that public policies must continue to create a favourable environment for private research investment. In addition, however, it is vitally important that sufficient financial resources are made available at the EU level to meet the ambitious and important goals of the 7th Framework Program. The contradiction between what governments say in favour of research and how they act, must be confronted. Research and innovation in Europe will only be able to contribute to meet the global challenges ahead, if research and innovation is seen as investment into Europe's future. Towards this end, we need strong national systems and a strong EU-level system, which reinforce each other.

The current process of negotiations between member states on the Financial Perspectives for 2007-2013, for which a drastic cut in the research budget is currently proposed, gives reasons for concern that adequate financial support for the 7th Framework Program may fail to appear. This would be a severe blow to the goal of sustainable knowledge-based growth, hamper the desperately needed improvement in employment and engender dismal consequences for research and innovation in Europe.

EURAB therefore urges you to take immediate action. The research community in Europe, whether in academia or industry, needs to join forces with national and European research organisations, academies of sciences, associations of universities and national and European industrial organisations. We urge all of you to take appropriate action – by writing and approaching your respective Prime Ministers, Ministers responsible for science, research, trade and industry and Ministers of Finance - with the strongest possible plea that, whatever the outcome of the discussions on the total budget for the European Union may be, the budget for research and innovation as proposed in the 7th Framework Program, should be maintained as being of vital importance for the future of Europe.

The media needs to be fully informed and to become engaged in helping to secure the future of Europe and to meet the common global challenges through research and innovation.

The Heads of State and Governments (European Council) will meet in Brussels on 16-17 June. It is time to act together and to take a firm public stand on the tremendous potential of science in Europe and the importance we see for the Commission's 7th Framework Program proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Helga Nowotny
Chair of EURAB

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