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Position of the Allianz der Wissenschaftsorganisationen (Alliance of Science Organizations in Germany) on the Future Research and Innovation Programme 2014 – 2020

The Allianz der Wissenschaftsorganisationen is a coalition of the most important German research organisations consisting of the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, the German Research Foundation (DFG), the Fraunhofer Gesellschaft, the Helmholtz Association, the German Rectors' Conference (HRK), the Leibniz Association, the Max Planck Society, and the German Council of Science and Humanities (Wissenschaftsrat).

The Alliance's members welcome the discussion concerning the future of EU research and innovation funding, induced by the European Commission's Green Book. Its key topics are the excellence of research, the primary position of science, the interaction of diversity and competition within the European Research Area, as well as the coherence between basic research and innovation. The main joint recommendations of the Alliance's members for the future EU research and innovation funding are summarized here below.

An Appropriate EU Budget for Research & Innovation

In order to raise the competitiveness of European research in the international context, the German scientific organisations, brought together in the Alliance, call for a budget increase for EU research and innovation programmes for the period 2014-2020. Especially, the budgets for the ERC, for collaborative research, for the Marie-Curie- and the infrastructure programmes should be increased, while assuring cost-covering funding rates. The structural and regional funds should also be used on a larger scale to promote research and innovation in order to strengthen the member states' scientific potential.

Scientific and Technological Excellence and Competition – Key Criteria for the Funding of Research Projects

Excellence and competition must remain the overarching criteria for the selection of European projects under the European Union's research funding programmes. The ERC Peer Review evaluation could serve as a model for the selection process of projects in all research areas. Experts should be selected following transparent rules and their assignment must be tailored to the content of the respective project; the self-designation of evaluators should be abandoned.

Foster the ERC as an EU Brand within the Global Research Area

The ERC's interim evaluation has confirmed its growing reputation as well as the high standard of the funded projects. Therefore, the ERC, whose key principle is scientific excellence, has to be further expanded as an outstanding programme for investigator-driven frontier research. Organisational structures that meet scientific standards, strengthen the Scientific Council and the scientific and administrative autonomy of the ERC, are essential prerequisites needed to render an attractive European Research Area.

Above this, investigator driven frontier research in general must be an integral part of all funding areas of the future research & innovation programme.

More Attractiveness for EU Research Funding Programmes through a Reduction of Bureaucracy

The attractiveness and the success of the EU Research Framework Programmes depend on efficient and adequate framework conditions for the participants. Prerequisites for a user-friendly funding programme are transparency, continuity, timely publishing and stability concerning the whole set of regulations and funding instruments. It is the European Commission's responsibility to ensure the consistent and comprehensive application of the rules and thus to provide legal certainty for the participants. An important requirement for this is the acceptance of national accounting and administrative systems. Furthermore, an increase of participation in the programme of Small and Medium Enterprises presupposes a substantial reduction of bureaucracy. European research funding should – as a matter of principle - be based on a higher amount of trust and the administrative effort of reporting should not discourage the participants from taking part in the funding programmes.

Funding instruments that have proven their value should be maintained. New funding instruments should be critically assessed on their suitability and strategic orientation before their introduction.

Collaborative Research as an Essential Instrument within the Research and Innovation Process

EU Research Framework Programmes have developed into an important networking instrument of the European science community. They significantly contribute to secure Europe's leading position in science and technology on the long run and help solve the Grand Societal Challenges. Collaborative research projects play a major role to achieve these objectives, as they promote knowledge exchange and are a fundamental instrument to permanently strengthen European and international research cooperation. They are the only instrument to fund European cooperations from a real common financial source and support projects that

probably would not have found the financial means on a national level. One of the great advantages they offer is, for instance, the principle of open partner selection throughout all sectors and the flexible adjustment of the consortium according to the needs of the target group. Therefore, collaborative research has to be funded from the generation of knowledge to its implementation and has to remain the core element of funding within the whole research & innovation budget, also in the future. In this context, the Alliance favourably assesses the funding of key technologies, too.

Strengthening of Human Resources and Mobility as a Requirement to Reach the EU 2020 objectives

According to a survey by the European Commission, Europe needs one million additional scientists to reach its new objectives. Thus, the mobility programme should be expanded to give a stronger support to structured doctoral programmes in form of the Initial Training Networks (ITN) and to increase the very low success rates. Structured doctoral programmes that are based on accepted quality standards of the scientific organisations should be eligible for funding in all programmes. However, the existing European doctoral funding programmes should be better coordinated in order to avoid overlapping among the funding profiles. Furthermore, individual scholarships should contribute to raise Europe's attractiveness as a research location through mobility and knowledge transfer.

Social Sciences and Humanities as an Essential Element with their own Thematic Programme

A European research and innovation policy, based on the EU 2020 objectives and committed to solve grand societal challenges, has to assure the interdisciplinary integration of the Social Sciences and Humanities by handling these challenges. Beyond this, the Social Sciences and Humanities should have their own funding programme with an adequate budget.

The high significance of mobility, social sciences and humanities, as well as all thematic fields of research, should be reflected in the organisational structure of the Directorate-General for Research & Innovation.

Ensuring the Sustainability of Existing and New European Infrastructures

Many scientific disciplines and technological innovation processes require nowadays the use of complex infrastructures for research and testing on both European and international level. The purpose of research infrastructures is not only to carry out experiments and measurements. They also promote the networking and exchange of knowledge amongst researchers and thus give an important impetus to the further development of science and technology. Hence, the future budget for funding European infrastructures should be raised substantially, based on a financial concept that has been agreed upon on regional, national, and European levels. This could facilitate and improve access for researchers from all member states and regions. The synergetic interconnectedness and the scientific use of existing infrastructures should experience greater support. Operation costs, which emerge for third parties due to the opening of new and existing infrastructures in Europe, should be considered as eligible costs up to an appropriate extent to give the so far underrepresented states the possibility of their usage. The set up of consortia to finance new European Research Infrastructures, including those on the ESFRI roadmap, should be supported by a help desk, which collects and circulates information from its experience with legal and organisational frameworks for such consortia. Furthermore, specific and transnational education programmes of European Infrastructures

tures, as well and especially those in cooperation with universities should be funded by EU-financed programmes. The funding of important regional research infrastructures from the structural and regional funds is a successful model to strengthen scientific communities around these infrastructures and in the regions concerned, and should be continued.

The Allianz der Wissenschaftsorganisationen will actively participate in the further European consultation process and its member organizations will give additional statements to specific thematic questions.

Berlin, April 16th 2011