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Attention: Newsdesks/ Education, Science correspondents

For Immediate Release

Universities: U-turn on Research Funding will harm Europe's competitiveness

EUA writes to MEPs and Jean-Claude Juncker

The European University Association (EUA) has today, 12th February, called on the European Parliament to reject proposals that would significantly cut investment in European research.

EUA, the broadest Europe-wide education and research organisation representing 850 higher education institutions, has written to MEPs asking them to oppose European Commission plans to remove 2.7 billion Euros from Horizon 2020 in order to finance the "European Funding for Strategic Investments" (EFSI) plan.

The organisation has also written an open letter to President Jean-Claude Juncker, urging the European Commission not to sideline European research and reconsider the funding sources for EFSI.

The Commission proposal, announced in January, is designed to tackle Europe's investment gap. While EUA supports efforts to boost job creation and growth, it mustn't come at the expense of Europe's research sector which is the backbone of Europe's future competitiveness.

The diversion of funds would affect the Excellent Science pillar, for instance the European Research Council and Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, as well as the Societal Challenges pillar (collaborative research).

EUA has also called for the inclusion of scientific oversight in the selection of projects that will be administered under EFSI to ensure that research and innovation plays a full part in tackling Europe's many challenges.

Lesley Wilson, Secretary General of EUA said:

"The proposed cuts to research are a worrying U-turn in the Commission's approach. In recent years the Commission was a key advocate for further research investment and there was strong support for collaborative research activities that demonstrated their economic impact.

"EUA is convinced that if the proposal goes ahead the EU will put itself at risk of losing ground against competitors that are investing heavily in research.

“Several EU countries have already substantially reduced research funding as a consequence of the economic crisis, as revealed by EUA’s annual [Public Funding Observatory](#). The commission’s plan follows an unacceptable trend of cuts to research and sends the wrong signal to national and regional policy makers.

“This issue is of major importance to universities as the reduction to funds will affect support for research collaboration. Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness and impact of European collaborative research on innovation, societal challenges and productivity in services. Europe needs this investment to continue.

“MEPs now have a full role to play in shaping the EFSI and we’re urging them to protect – not downgrade – European research funding.”

Notes

1. The European Parliament will vote on the EFSI in committee at the end of March. Further to the EUA statements issued in [December 2014](#) and [January 2015](#) and the [joint statement](#) with the European Research Area stakeholders, the letters to the European Parliament and European Commission mark the second phase of EUA’s campaign.
2. [A copy of the Open Letter can be found here.](#)

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The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors’ conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA’s mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.