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Euroscience Statement on the threat of budget cuts in science in Europe

Across the European Union and the wider Europe, governments are engaged in cutting public expenditure and we are entering an unprecedented period of austerity. Thus, public support for research is now at risk in a manner not seen before and just at the time when Europe faces new challenges from the rising new economies, especially in Asia, and when threats to our quality of life from climate change, demographic change and energy, food and resource availability and sustainability are becoming evermore threatening and urgent. This undermines the EU Lisbon process, to create a leading knowledge-based economy which must remain as the aim of governments and societies across Europe.

Governments reduce spending on science education and on research at our and future generations' peril. Science and technology is a long-term investment not a commodity that can be turned on and off at will without any real effect. It is a long-term investment to underpin and secure our future prosperity and quality of life.

Euroscience, the European organisation for the promotion of science and technology and the grassroots voice of researchers across Europe, expresses its alarm and concern at the short-termism of many governments, apart from a few notable exceptions, in Europe as they react to the financial crisis.

Investment in research across all disciplines must be sustained in order to provide the framework for future advances and the well-being of European society, particularly when faced with increased research budgets in many other parts of the World. The threat of a new 'brain drain' is now real. The Lisbon and Barcelona target of 3% GERD, of which one third must come from public sources, must remain and, with determination on the part of governments, is achievable. Not only is it attainable but it is absolutely necessary when other countries and regions especially the new economies in Asia and South America are substantially increasing their investment in research.

Euroscience is deeply concerned at proposed cuts in research investment in the UK, Spain, Italy and several other countries just at the time when the excellence of our research is proven by all the accepted output indicators.

It must be remembered that society has agreed to pay the debt of the financial system - we have literally 'socialised' their debt. The size of what we would need to secure the steady progress of science in Europe is negligible in comparison with the help provided for the financial system and higher R&D investment is a means of tackling the financial crisis and increasing long-term economic growth.

Euroscience urges governments of all political persuasions across Europe to recognise the critical importance of research investment to our future economic success, deploras proposed cuts to science budgets and urges the EU, collectively and individually, to sustain public investment in science and technology at this critical juncture in our economic development. The actions of the European Union itself through European Research Area and future EU Framework Programmes as well as the Innovation Union should also recognise this necessity.

EUROSCIENCE

1 quai Lezay Marnésia | F - 67000 Strasbourg
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 24 11 50 | Fax: +33 (0)3 88 24 75 56
E-mail: office@euroscience.org | www.euroscience.org