

Dear President of the European Parliament,

Dear President of the European Commission,

Dear Minister,

Dear Commissioner,

Dear Chairwoman of ITRE Committee,

23rd May 2012

Evaluations into research support instruments show that we should use European capacities in research and innovation more efficiently. Clearly, the Commission's proposal for the Horizon 2020 package is a step in the right direction. But four months after the publication of the package it is evident that, even though significant progress has been achieved, the issue of widening participation has not been properly addressed.

We fully support and appreciate the efforts made by the European Commission to overcome this challenge, but we feel that on the eve of a new financial perspective, we should recognize the important role of a widening participation in building the European Research Area (ERA) by including a **dedicated article in the Regulation establishing Horizon 2020**, and further on, to agree on appropriate measures, real actions and effective instruments that will stimulate participation of new, excellent research teams. In a time of crisis, it is necessary to develop a more inclusive programme that without compromising the excellence will equally recognize talent all over Europe.

Therefore, based on extensive consultations with the stakeholders and future beneficiaries we would like, with the present letter, to express our common concerns and to propose to you **possible solutions** that could stimulate further work.

It is widely accepted that large research infrastructures attract the best young talents and the best research teams. That is why it is crucial to ensure equal access to all excellent **research infrastructures** within the EU. The cooperation between Member States should be supported by Horizon 2020 as a good example of EU added value activities. The European Commission should assist Member States in their efforts to integrate and open the national/regional research facilities by providing an EU-wide information system on accessible national/regional research infrastructures. It is also important to promote the attractiveness of regional research infrastructures that have reached a high level of research capacity. This could improve not only regional and national capacity building, but would also contribute to an increased "circulation of knowledge" and mobility of researchers.

The main goal for all of us is to make Horizon 2020 as simple and effective as possible. We appreciate all the improvements towards shortening the time-to-grant and we are ready to support further simplification measures. We are also of the opinion that a beneficiaries' effort and costs in preparing proposals should be recognised. Keeping in mind the overarching objective of widening participation and whilst trying to improve and maximise the effectiveness of the preparation phase of the project, we would like to suggest the launch of a pilot **two-stage evaluation procedure** in selected areas, based on the experiences gathered so far under FP7 activities. The two-stage procedure should be supplemented by ensuring - in the evaluation process - the presence of excellent groups of evaluators from different Member States and with different backgrounds. These would contribute to the avoidance of closed clubs and would create fair conditions for newcomers in European projects.

The issue of **personnel costs** is of special concern for researchers in the European Union. It is a well-known fact that there are significant discrepancies between Member States as far as researchers' salaries are concerned. The present system increases the brain-drain as it remunerates same tasks and qualifications unevenly in different regions. Furthermore, the present system is complex and causes problems, both for the beneficiaries and for the European Commission, as it is one of the ten most common errors identified in cost claims of framework programme projects. Our intention is to support brain circulation and to simplify procedures in addition to making the rules of calculating remuneration more flexible. We suggest using for example the model of remuneration under the Maria Skłodowska Curie Action scheme as an option in the whole Horizon 2020. Entities could decide which model to use for their remuneration of personnel costs. A better and fairer recognition of the value of excellence would motivate researchers to participate in Horizon 2020 and diminish the number of negative audits in the future. It should also be noted that in reducing the personnel costs divide will increase the attractiveness of research careers, which will facilitate reaching the target of one million new researchers in 2020.

The EU support for **small and medium sized projects** is of utmost importance. Small and medium sized research teams can often be more focused and goal oriented as well as being able to deal better with specific disciplines such as social sciences and humanities. By preserving a well-balanced allocation of funds between small and medium sized projects on one side and large projects on the other side we can also increase the number of entities – SMEs as well – participating in Horizon 2020. Furthermore, Horizon 2020 should implement horizontally, through all the three pillars of the programme, schemes for small and medium sized projects since they contribute to the spreading and developing of excellence throughout the EU.

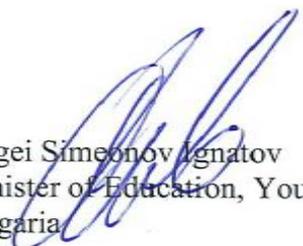
We would like to draw your attention to some concerns regarding the **concept of smart specialisation strategies**. It is important to stress that regional policy is an exclusive competence of Member States. However, actions taken by the European Commission could support implementation of this concept on the Member States level. As the concept of smart

specialisation strategies is connected with research, a clear indication of excellent national and regional research centres might constitute a corner stone for such strategies.

Setting the programme is in itself a challenge, but creating the right environment for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation of results is even more challenging. There is a clear need to undertake all necessary measures to foster better exploitation of innovation, research and technological development. According to the European Commission's proposal, Horizon 2020 should support the achievement and functioning of the ERA. It is indispensable in evaluating whether Horizon 2020 sufficiently contributes to closing the research and innovation divide in Europe. This could be done by setting up concrete **targets** followed by a set of **indicators** measuring progress in the widening participation of Horizon 2020.

In a time of the crisis, many Member States implement harsh structural reforms of research and university sectors, accompanied by additional public spending in order to strengthen regional and national research and innovation potential. With full respect to national and regional efforts on building the stairs to excellence, Horizon 2020 will be the most important financial instrument supporting the creation of the European Research Area. We must assure that with this instrument we invest in a more competitive position of EU research and innovation on the global market.

Yours sincerely,



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Bulgaria



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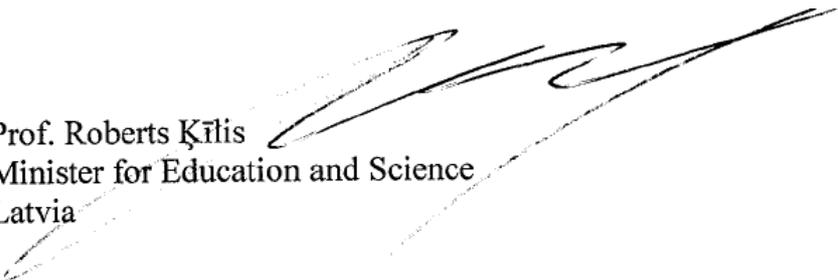
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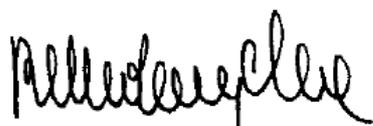


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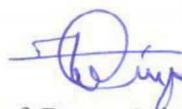


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