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Date: May 31, 2018
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Our reference: VSNU 18/081 U
Your reference: -
Attachment(s): 2

Subject: New Framework Programme

Dear Mr. Sipilä, Dear Mr. Rutte,

The Dutch and Finnish universities consider the European research programmes to be of great importance. The current Horizon 2020 programme is making a profound contribution to Europe's excellence in fundamental research, to industrial and economical innovation and to tackling the societal challenges that Europe faces.

However, we should not be blinded by the success of the current programme. With this letter, we offer you the position papers of both Dutch and Finnish universities for the development of a new Framework Programme that is even more successful than Horizon 2020. In the papers, we argue that following key points need to be addressed in the new programme, in order to realise this ambition.

First of all, we believe that the European Union can and should maximise its added value for European citizens by focussing more resources in a concerted way on excellent research and innovation. In view of the importance for economical and societal development and the positive effects on our global competitiveness, we thus strongly advise to increase the budget of the new programme compared to the present, both in terms of relative and absolute financial levels. The High Level Group under the direction of Pascal Lamy has advised to double the budget. The proposal of the European Commission for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2028 is making first steps in this direction. We feel that for the sake of European competitiveness the FP9 budget should be at least 120 Bln Euro for the next financial period.

Furthermore, we argue that scientific excellence should always be the main criterion for the selection and support of research projects and programmes. The excellence principle is currently firmly embedded in the Horizon 2020 programme, with the ERC as its prime example. There is every reason to continue excellence as a main criterion in future

programmes. In our papers, we also address the importance of increasing the impact of Research & Innovation, which can be realised by investing in open science, for example.

To tackle the societal and economical challenges Europe faces it is essential to stimulate interdisciplinary research and fully integrate the Social Sciences and Humanities in the programme. Moreover, Dutch and Finnish universities argue that a new Framework Programme should leave ample room for excellent fundamental research, as this is the foundation and core of scientific breakthroughs in all disciplines. These breakthroughs offer new opportunities and have overall an enormous impact on society. We need to include all talents and regions in order to fully capitalise on all of Europe's potential. National investments in research and research infrastructure are conditional for the new Framework Programme.

Finally, we wish to highlight one concern for the new Framework Programme: the modest success rates of project proposals. Modest success rates are not only an issue in Horizon 2020, but also in the national funding programmes and other national programmes throughout Europe. Raising success rates, combined with further simplification, is key to efficiency and preserving the interest of excellent researchers and research groups to participate in the programme.

The Dutch and Finnish universities are keen to elaborate on these key points for the future Framework Programme in further detail.

Kind regards,

Pieter Duisenberg
President
VSNU

Jukka Mönkkönen
President
UNIFI