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ETUCE

European Trade Union Committee for Education EI European Region

Statement

EUROPEAN REGION-
ETUCE

on Horizon 2020 – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation

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The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)* broadly welcomes the European Commission's Horizon2020 proposal. However, we would like to elaborate our views on the proposal to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Competitiveness Council..

1. ETUCE calls for more research to improve democracy in Europe, to develop critical analysis of society, to prepare for the future, and to challenge global problems. Research should contribute to improving European citizenship, especially at a time of economic and financial crisis.
2. We welcome the fact that one of the objectives of the proposal is to achieve excellent science. However, as far as ETUCE is concerned, the perspective of the proposal is too economy, labour market and business- oriented. This could be an obstacle for numerous researchers, especially in basic research and non-profitmaking research, applying for funds in the programme. The objectives of the programme should be more social and less economic as research should support democracy, more social responsibility, and equity.
3. We strongly support the view of the European Commission that research and science are of significance in solving different problems at various levels of society and it should not be limited to solving only the recent economic problems. The societal elements are vital and, in establishing the budget, should be treated as contributing to solutions and not as a problem. This basic function of research should also be respected in individual countries that, due to austerity measures, tend to consider higher education and research as an instrument to fix their public budget deficits from short-term perspectives. The text of the proposal should include reference to this issue.
4. ETUCE warmly welcomes the fact that the programme will involve actions to remove barriers preventing women from pursuing successful scientific careers and that the Commission is committed to reaching the target of 40% female participation in its advisory structures. However, many female researchers still leave the profession because of the unacceptably high (and unfortunately growing) number of fixed term contracts – in particular, at the beginning of an academic career. We would like to highlight that more attractive career-prospects for young female researchers will have a huge positive effect on the total number of female researchers at all career stages. Furthermore, we would like to



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emphasise that, along with gender equality, the social dimension should be given more prominence in the proposal.

5. ETUCE is concerned that Priority 2 on Industrial Leadership demonstrates the European Commission preference to support private, business oriented research institutions. We are concerned that this will contribute to the marketisation of publicly financed research institutions by funding only those “activities where businesses set the agenda.” We would like to stress that this objective may also reduce the autonomy of universities.
6. So far, the coordination of the projects has been very burdensome. Therefore, we support the proposal aims to widen participation by the simplification of the rules and procedures for applications and by reducing the average time to grant by 100 days. Simplification of the application process may broaden participation in the programme and will decrease the administrative burden that has been one of the main drawbacks in EU funded research.
7. ETUCE welcomes the European Commission’s wish to strengthen international cooperation and to open participation by applicants from third countries and neighbourhood countries in the framework of the programme.
8. We also agree with the objective of Horizon2020, which is intended to support better the researchers' careers and mobility and to make the research profession more attractive. At the same time, we would like to emphasise, that if the European Commission wants to establish an attractive labour market for researchers, it is vital to ensure a supportive environment including a protection of academic freedom and good career prospects for researchers. Therefore, we would like to draw the attention of the European Commission to our policy paper presented at the Bologna Follow-Up group meeting in Krakow in 2011 entitled *The Bologna Process: the case for a Supportive Environment for Academic staff, and the key features of a Supportive Environment*.¹
9. We also warmly welcome the reference in the proposal to the European Charter for Researchers². We would like to emphasise that the Charter should belong to the mainstream of EU policy, as an essential document to refer to, although some parts of it are not applicable. Thus, we propose a substantial revision of the Charter, which should be based on a debate among the social partners through the appropriate social dialogue mechanism. We would like to stress that receiving grants in the framework programme should be dependent on the implementation of this new revised Charter.

¹

http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Irina/BFUG_PL_AM_26_14.2_Supportive%20working%20environment%20for%20academic%20staff.pdf

²“ In order to contribute to the attractiveness of the research career, Horizon2020 will pay adequate attention to the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, together with other relevant reference frameworks defined in the context of the ERA, while respecting their voluntary nature. “ Communication, p 13.

At the same time, when decisions are made about funding of research through the Horizon2020 research programme, it should be taken into consideration that the projects / institutions funded have incorporated the Charter and Code of Conduct in their policies. Ideally, it should be one of criteria taken into consideration and used when decisions on funding are made in connection with the Horizon2020 research funding.

10. We consider the proposed European funding for research to be seriously deficient.. The allocation of funds should be greater and equal among the research areas. Until 2020, only 7 billion Euros per year (0,05% of the European GDP) is proposed for research and science compared with the individual countries who are expected to invest 4% of their GDP in this field. However, the problems Europe and world face will require substantial development of research, including basic research, and a much more appropriate budget. The research expenditure within the EU budget should be increased considerably. Horizon2020 is essential for the implementation of the ERA that should be in place by the end of 2013.
11. Since Horizon2020 is a financial instrument, distribution of funding for research is of vital importance. We consider the budget of Horizon2020 for the 1st priority (€ 24 598 million)³ aiming at strengthening the EU's position in science is very modest. We welcome the funding for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, but at the same time we urge the European Union institutions to increase the funding for more mobility within Europe in the context of research training. It is essential that the new Horizon2020 should solve the problem arising in many countries, where scholars are considered as "guests" and not employees and thus are excluded from normal social protection provisions etc. for employees.
12. We welcome the investment in human resources through the increase in funding of 77% for the European Research Council, which supports and increases the possibilities of postdoctoral researchers to do research in Europe. At the same time, we would like to urge the European Commission to support researchers in permanent positions (tenure) in the context of Horizon2020 as the growing number of postdoctoral jobs will otherwise result in more fixed term contracts. Horizon2020 should refer to the European Charter for Researchers on the role of the institutions in taking responsibility for their researchers and their careers.
13. As for the 2nd priority of the programme, which aims to strengthen industrial leadership and innovation via € 17 938 million⁴, the European Commission should take into account that European industry is facing fierce competition. Therefore, we believe that it is vital to acknowledge in the proposal that higher education, research and knowledge are important means to tackle this challenge.

³ "Strengthen the EU's position in science will be dedicated with a budget of € 24 598 million. This will provide a boost to top-level research in Europe, including an increase in funding of 77% for the very successful European Research Council (ERC)."

http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm?pg=h2020

⁴ "Strengthen industrial leadership in innovation € 17 938 million. This includes major investment in key technologies, greater access to capital and support for SMEs" *ibid.*

14. One of our other concerns is the fact that the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) receives a very preferential treatment in the budget of Horizon2020 and it will be financially strengthened. The growth of funding will be three fold compared what was allocated to it in the previous framework programme, which means that a large share of the budget for research funding will be committed to the support of EIT. ETUCE is surprised by the fact that funding is earmarked in the Horizon2020 budget to EIT across several sectors mainly because the European Commission does not provide sufficient arguments for this rapid growth. Therefore, we urge the European Commission to clarify the reason for the higher allocation of funds for the Institute and to consider redirecting the proposed budget of the EIT to enhanced mobility and training of researchers.
15. ETUCE agrees with the 3rd priority of the programme⁵ to focus on sustainable development. We would like to highlight that ecological transition, green energy and reduction of carbon emission are essential, urgent, and perhaps vital for Europeans and humankind.
16. We are concerned that merging all sub-programmes for research can be an obstacle to applications for smaller projects.. Supporting small, individual research proposals and projects should be as important as projects of large consortia.
17. Humanities and large sectors of social sciences do not have a clear role among the objectives of the programme; strengthening the research activities in those sectors is an omission. We urge the European Commission to recognise that the improvement of basic and applied research in these fields as well as their interaction with the other scientific areas should be reinforced.
18. Although ETUCE agrees with the principle that research projects for funding should be selected on merit, we would welcome maintenance of the principle that there should be more equal, socio-economically diverse distribution among partners in the research proposals, given the large inequities in terms of research capacity which exist in Europe.
19. While we welcome the increased mobility of young researchers in Europe, we are concerned about the possible undesirable consequences of large numbers of researchers on employment conditions of the hosting institutions. The engagement of early stage researchers in EU funded projects should not lead to an increase of short-term temporary contracts in universities. ETUCE asks the European Commission to consider establishing a monitoring mechanism and setting quotas on how many temporary contract researchers can be engaged in research projects.

⁵ "Provide € 31 748 million to help address major concerns shared by all Europeans such as climate change, developing sustainable transport and mobility, making renewable energy more affordable, ensuring food safety and security, or coping with the challenge of an ageing population." Ibid.

20. We would urge the European Commission to safeguard the copyrights in the context of the proposed Open Access facility, which is to disseminate more widely the research results.

21. Finally, yet importantly, ETUCE hopes that we can have a more positive role in implementing the proposal if our recommendations are taken into account in the final text.

**The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 135 Teacher Unions and 12.8 million teachers in all countries of Europe, 5.5 million teachers in the EU, from all levels of the education sector. ETUCE is a Social Partner in education at the EU level and a European Trade Union Federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of Education International, the global federation of teacher unions.*