

DECLARATION

Added Value of Excellence in European Research

Europe is built on a reliable basis of common values and traditions and Europe's success in the future will extensively depend on its knowledge base. Essential to realizing this future are Europe's major strengths in research: its cutting-edge and diverse science and innovation landscape, its world-class science and research institutions, both public and private.

European institutions have achieved tremendous progress towards the open circulation of researchers and ideas, though some gaps remain which should be closed, and they have succeeded in generating a European research identity in the framework of the European Research Area (ERA). This Research Area has to be strengthened in light of the political challenges Europe is facing today in order to secure sustainable economic growth and employment built on the achievements of excellent research.

Major European science organizations and universities together with prominent industrial enterprises convened at a high-level round table organized by the CNRS and the MPG in Brussels on 6 and 7 March 2017, have developed the following common positions:

- Centres of excellence must be strengthened all over the continent to safeguard the outstanding position of European science and Europe's capacity for innovation.
- Europe should less focus on gradual improvements of existing technologies but rather on fundamentally new ideas and disruptive innovation within "ecosystems" which – by means of EU-funding – drive excellence, optimally link academic and industrial research institutions and support the efficient transformation of excellent scientific knowledge into innovative products and solutions thus generating economic wealth on which tomorrow's research funding ultimately depend.
- High priority should be given to cultivate new generations of scientists and to nurture the brightest and most creative minds, stimulating them to conduct cutting-edge research within a context of autonomy and academic freedom and to attract them by providing world-class research infrastructures.
- It should be reaffirmed that research including the social sciences and the humanities are essential to solve grand and global challenges. European higher education institutions and research performing organizations must be recognized as critically important and legitimate actors for the development of new knowledge.
- Global competition demands that research funding – at national and European level – be driven exclusively by scientific excellence, and that the European Framework Programmes be continued with a larger budget. EU funding must not compensate any shortage of national investments in R&D, nor should it divert European countries from reaffirming their strong commitment to reaching the 3% GDP-goal.
- To enable excellent science and thus to create new types of jobs suited to a changing world and to pave the way to sustainable growth, EU funding should aim at:
 - Establishing a critical mass of creative (young) researchers across the whole continent,
 - guaranteeing open access to knowledge and to excellent cutting-edge research infrastructures as well as supporting international cooperation and the unhampered circulation of scientists,
 - ensuring the continued strength of the European Research Council (ERC) which has become a global benchmark and the strongest driver for research excellence in Europe, and
 - providing funding schemes based on thematically open calls for "frontier research" collaborative projects responding to a clear need for long-term and fundamental non-market oriented research, in conjunction with state-of-the-art transparent international evaluation procedures.



Brussels, 7 March 2017