



MAX-PLANCK-GESellschaft



JOINT STATEMENT by CNRS and MPG on the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)

The Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) and the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (MPG) welcome the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) initiated by the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker. We note Commissioner Moedas' view that EFSI will make a significant contribution to investments in research and innovation. These significant contributions, however, will be effective only if EFSI-funded projects serve to strengthen universities and research institutions and by these means promote individual scientists. We expect that the EFSI will outline a vision as to how the European Union can achieve the goal of raising expenditures for research and innovation to 3 percent of GDP.

CNRS and MPG suggest that a substantial part of the investment package should be used to invest in research infrastructure all over Europe. Even Germany and France are in need of sufficient investments in existing infrastructure, including the modernization of buildings, labs and large-scale scientific instruments. EFSI-funded projects of this kind have to be selected according to science-based criteria.

Given that EFSI is determined to attract private investments, CNRS and MPG point out that universities and public research organizations in Europe will, in most cases, be prevented from profiting by the EFSI. Typically, these institutions are denied borrowing on the capital market. Therefore, prudent solutions have to be developed allowing government-financed institutions' direct or indirect participation in EFSI measures.

CNRS and MPG are very much concerned about the budget cuts of Horizon 2020 envisaged in order to fill up EFSI. The scientific community has reacted, especially with a view to the planned reduction of the European Research Council (ERC) funds. ERC-funded researchers pursue cutting-edge ideas at the frontiers of knowledge, which entails high risk. As frontier research, and consequently the ERC, will not benefit from EFSI, it should be excluded from any

budget cuts. The ERC would be disproportionately damaged by such cuts, which, in addition, can be perceived as an alienation from the objective to strengthen excellence in research on the European level.

CNRS and MPG conceive that the ERC is a real success story by funding nearly 5,000 researchers at research institutions such as CNRS and MPG or many other world-class universities and research organizations. These grants have a strong leverage effect in creating breakthrough innovations and large numbers of additional jobs and growth in Europe. Therefore, budget cuts of ERC would hinder the emergence of future generations of highly qualified young scientists, and have a negative impact on their future employment at leading institutions and universities in Europe.

Our vision – and that of the scientific community for the ERC – is to boost its position as a world-leading institution of highest reputation for promoting scientific excellence and attracting the brightest scientific talents from all countries. This will require independent decision-making and competitive funding on a global scale. The planned ERC budget cuts jeopardize this vision and, as a further consequence, will weaken Europe's position in the international competition for talents.

Frontier research is instrumental to innovation, and therefore essential to the well-being of the European society. All aspects of research and education deserve to be matters of highest priority. In this respect, the European Research Council is unique and indispensable for fostering excellence in frontier research.

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