



**European Research Council**  
Scientific Council

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**Press release of the ERC Scientific Council**

15 November 2012

**Nobel laureates today meet Presidents of EU institutions  
to warn against cuts to the EU research budget**

A delegation led by Nobel laureates today meets the President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz, the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, to urge EU leaders to secure the future budget for research and innovation *Horizon 2020*. They will hand in an [open letter](#), signed by 44 Nobel laureates and 6 Fields medallists, warning against the dramatic consequences of possible budget cuts in research and innovation. The delegation will also draw attention to a petition [“No cuts on research”](#) in support of this cause; to date signed by over 131 000 citizens in Europe and across the globe. These Europe-wide initiatives are launched ahead of the 22-23 November European summit on the overall EU budget for 2014 till 2020.

Sir Tim Hunt, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2001, and member of the European Research Council (ERC) Scientific Council said: *“It is a great honour for us to meet the EU Presidents in Brussels. I hope our discussions will promote the initiatives led by the research community. It would be a mistake to cut funding in research and innovation, which are crying out for investment. Disproportionate budget cuts would not only cause pain to thousands of researchers, but also lead to ‘brain drain’ to the U.S. and elsewhere. Europe can ill afford to lose its most talented scientists and engineers.”*

The open letter which was initiated by Nobel laureates Sir Tim Hunt and Professor Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, both members of the ERC Scientific Council, underlines *“it is essential that*



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*we support, and even more importantly, inspire in a pan-European way the extraordinary wealth of research and innovation potential that exists all over Europe" and warns that "in case of severe cuts to the EU research and innovation budget we risk losing a generation of talented scientists just when Europe needs them most."* The letter, which was published in key media on 23 October, also points to the ERC that "*has achieved global recognition in a remarkably short time.*"

Today's initiative aims to preserve the European Commission's proposed budget for 2014-2020 (€ 80 billion, see [EC press release](#)) thus ensuring that research and innovation do not suffer from disproportionate cuts when compared to other programmes.

Building upon the letter, young researchers from various scientific fields launched a petition coordinated by the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE), making an appeal to EU leaders for not making cuts to the research budget. Within hours, thousands of citizens signed it across all EU member states and worldwide, and to date they are over 131 000. The petition will be handed in to the three EU Presidents.

**The delegation led by Nobel Laureates that will meet the EU Presidents, is composed of:**

- Sir Tim Hunt (Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine 2001)
- Jules Hoffmann (Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine 2011)
- Helga Nowotny (President of the European Research Council)
- Maria Leptin (President of the Initiative for Science in Europe and Director of the European Molecular Biology Organisation, EMBO)
- Wolfgang Eppenschwandtner (Executive Coordinator of the Initiative for Science in Europe)
- Leif Schröder (Secretary for the Young Academy of Europe)

**The meetings for Thursday 15 November are scheduled as follows:**

**14h20:** Meeting of the delegation with the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz

**16h30:** Meeting with the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy



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**17h00:** Meeting with the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso

A **press point** is organised on Thursday 15 November by the European Parliament [ITRE](#) Committee (Industry, Research and Energy) in the European Parliament (Room ASP 5G2) from 14h30 to 15h00 with the participation of ITRE chairwoman Amalia Sartori.

There will be opportunities for photos and media queries. Interviews can be organised upon request.

Press material of these meetings will be provided by the AV services of each EU institution:

[European Commission:](#) [photos](#), [video](#)

[European Parliament:](#) [video](#), [press conference](#)

[European Council:](#) [photos](#), [video](#)

[European Commission Press Release](#)

### **Note to the editors:**

#### About the European Research Council ([ERC](#))

Set up in 2007 by the European Union, the ERC aims to stimulate scientific excellence in Europe by encouraging competition for funding between the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age based in the EU. Since its launch, it has funded over 3,000 researchers and their frontier research projects and has become a "benchmark" for the competitiveness of national research systems complementing existing funding schemes at national and European levels. The ERC operates according to an "investigator-driven", or "bottom-up", approach, allowing researchers to identify new opportunities in all fields of research (Physical Sciences and Engineering, Life Sciences and Social Sciences and Humanities).

#### About the Initiative for Science in Europe ([ISE](#))

The Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE) is an independent platform of European learned societies and scientific organizations which aim to promote mechanisms to support all fields of science at a European level, involve scientists in the design and implementation of European science policies, and to advocate strong independent scientific advice in European policy making.

#### About the Young Academy of Europe ([YAE](#))

The Young Academy of Europe (YAE) is a newly established pan-European initiative of outstanding young scientists who wished to create a platform for networking, scientific exchange and science policy. They endorsed the open letter by Nobel laureates in a statement raising their concerns regarding imminent cuts to the research budget and warned against the negative long-term consequences for Europe's economic, social and intellectual prosperity.



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**For more information:**

ERC website  
<http://erc.europa.eu>

Horizon 2020 website  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm)

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