

Serbian Brain Council

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Belgrade, 05. 09. 2018

Your Excellency Ambassador Hrustanović,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Serbian Brain Council (SBC) and the European Brain Council (EBC) in connection with the current negotiations for the next EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation in Europe. We took note of the proposal establishing Horizon Europe that was published in June 2018 and are highly concerned about the provisional budget of €7,7 billion allocated to the “Health” cluster under Pillar II. In view of this, SBC and EBC together with our partners from other National Brain Councils, recently submitted feedback to the European Commission, calling for a redistribution of the Pillar II budget in order to make more funding available for health research (see attachment). With this letter, we would like to urge you to call upon the heads of government of the EU member states and the candidate countries to support these recommendations and make a strong case for increasing the budget of the “Health” cluster.

Adopting a 9th Framework Programme with a robust budget for health research is a key requisite for reducing the societal impact and economic costs of brain disorders across the EU and in candidate countries. Mental and neurological conditions represent some of the most pressing challenges faced by European society as it is estimated that more than 1 in 3 Europeans, i.e. close to 179 million people, are likely to be affected by these disorders of the brain. The annual cost for treating these conditions is close to €800 billion for Europe. Furthermore, data released by the Lancet in 2015 underlined that neurological conditions were the cause of 10,2% of Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) and 16,8% of global deaths. An additional Lancet report published in 2016 indicated that ill mental health resulted in 13,0% of DALYs and data made available in the JAMA Psychiatry in 2015 underlined that 14,3% of global deaths were caused by mental disorders.

We strongly believe that the proposed budget of €7,7 billion made available to fund the “Health” cluster is insufficient to effectively address the human suffering caused by brain disorders. What is more, the indicative budget confirms a steady decrease of funding allocated to health research across Framework Programmes, as health was previously allocated 12% under the 7th Framework Programme, 10% under Horizon 2020 and now 8% in the Horizon Europe proposal. In the light of this, **we urge you to make a strong call for substantially increasing the budget of the “Health” cluster.** Such measure would significantly boost health research and accelerate science, to the benefit of those living with mental or neurological conditions.

We would be immensely grateful to you for kindly taking our call into account and offer to support you in making the next Framework Programme a key milestone in progressing brain research in Serbia and beyond. In the meantime, we remain at your disposal should you require any further information.

With kind regards,



Professor Pavle R. Andjus, PhD
President
Serbian Brain Council



Professor Monica Di Luca
President
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