

Helmholtz International

On this special page, we report news from the Helmholtz offices in Brussels, Moscow and Beijing several times a year. Specific focus is on cooperation and partnership ventures of the Helmholtz Association in Russia, China and the EU as well as on selected international research policy news.

News from the Brussels Office:

Cuts in EU Research Funding?

The on-going negotiations for the EU budget for the years 2014 to 2020 have presently entered into a crucial phase: On 22 November 2012, the EU heads of state and government will convene to decide, amongst other things, on the total sum of the EU budget as well as possibly also on how it is going to be allocated. It can be assumed that, following an initiative by those EU member states who are net contributors, the EU budget will undergo cuts. This could have negative effects also on the research budget.

Cuts in this field of spending are likely to occur on several grounds. To begin with, all budgetary areas would have to introduce measures to save on costs. Traditionally, however, some budgetary areas have a stronger political lobby and therefore find themselves less threatened by cuts in the budget. This would result in disproportionate cuts in the other budgetary areas. Moreover, the next research framework programme "Horizon 2020", which will become effective as of 2014, is not listed as a separate item in the "Multiannual Financial Framework" that is currently under debate and therefore may enjoy even less protection than other programmes.

In addition, research representatives based in Brussels consider it highly problematic, that, over a long period of time, the European Commission has illustrated the "Horizon 2020" budget of 80 billion Euro to be an increase compared to the Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7). In absolute numbers, the new framework programme is indeed to receive more money, however, these funds are intended to cover also fields of spending, which so far are still covered by other budgets, for instance, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). Likewise, it is not yet determined whether or not ITER and GMES will be included in the "Horizon 2020" budget after all.



In the event of cuts to the EU spending on research and compared to large scale projects, smaller joint projects, for instance, on the topic of climate change, would have a reduced chance of being allocated EU funding. Photo: UFZ/André Künzelmann

Therefore, should the suggested research budget now undergo cuts, this ultimately would not mean "less growth than hoped for", but rather "less research funding than was the case so far". In combination with the tendency towards funding for larger programme structures, cuts within the "Horizon 2020" budget thus may well end up being carried out on the backs of the smaller coordinated EU projects.

Recently, 42 Nobel Prize laureates as well as five Fields medalists have published an open letter in order to raise awareness regarding the danger of potential cuts to the future research budget in the context of "Horizon 2020". Already, more than 120,000 people have signed an according petition, including also many members of the Helmholtz Association.

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One Year of Science Europe – What does this signify for the science community?

Representing Research in Europe

Science Europe is a young organisation that was established as recently as in October 2011. It is to give a voice to the scientific community on an European level, that is, to represent the research community in Brussels or, respectively, at the various European institutions. At present, Science Europe has 50 members, for the most part funding agencies. However, members include also research organisations: the Helmholtz Association is a member of Science Europe, as is also the Leibniz Association

and the Max Planck Society. The member organisations have defined the following phrase as Science Europe's mission statement: "shaping the future of research".

What does this entail exactly for individual scientists?

The aim of Science Europe is to contribute to the further establishment of the European Research Area (ERA). Science Europe therefore engages in science-based consulting for politicians and works on topics such as:

- Researcher job mobility and careers
- Improved coordination of national research funding systems through, amongst other things, improved, harmonised funding conditions, knowledge transfer and strengthening of European research infrastructures
- Increased involvement of women in research
- Modernisation of the universities
- Opening up the EU towards international cooperation

This portfolio of topics and issues demonstrates that, in future, the work of Science Europe can have a very direct impact on the framework conditions for scientists of all fields. In July 2012, Science Europe was one of five stakeholder organisations to have been invited to the ceremonial publication of the European Commission's statement on the ERA. Also, it signed a statement on the implementation of the ERA that was jointly negotiated with the European Commission.

This illustrates that the Commission is very much interested in this new organisation as a partner in debate. It is therefore important to represent the interests of the Helmholtz Association within this new organisation and, in the first few years, to develop solid internal processes for agreeing on statements. According to Science Europe President Professor Paul Boyle, UK, the key areas of focus ought to be the "European Grant Union", that is, facilitated cooperation across borders for scientists, as well as Open Access. These were the points he stressed on occasion of signing the ERA statement. Furthermore, Boyle made the following statement as regards the priorities of Science Europe: "In all cases, members have individual and collective experience that will be built on in taking the roadmap forward."

Further information: www.scienceeurope.org



Science Europe President Paul Boyle signs the joint ERA statement. In the background: Robert Jan Smits, Director General of DG Research and Innovation, and Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, EU Research Commissioner. Photo: European Union, 2012

Background and current state:

Science Europe emerged from EUROHORCS (Heads of European Research Councils – dissolved in October 2011) and the European Science Foundation (ESF – intended for dissolution by the end of 2014). Science Europe has adopted many discussion forums and working groups from the ESF and the EUROHORCS, to which, in turn, the member organisations make contributions. The Helmholtz Office Brussels is involved in some of these activities, for example, in the Member Organisations' Forum on Research Infrastructures, MERIL (Mapping of European Research Infrastructure Landscape) and in the working group on "Horizon 2020". Yet Science Europe does not perceive its task as limited to European issues only, but is also active in the Global Research Council.

News from the Beijing Office:

Increased Cooperation Between European and Chinese Universities

Representatives from leading natural scientific and technical universities from Europe and China convened in Harbin in North China for the 3rd Sino-EU Workshop on Engineering Education. The members of CLUSTER (Consortium Linking Universities of Science and Technology for Education and Research), an association of twelve natural scientific and technical European universities, approved the "Harbin Roadmap" cooperation agreement. "The Harbin Roadmap sets down concrete steps to-

wards cooperation. For instance, as of 2013, several "Sino-EU Doctoral Schools" are to be established, for example, with a focus on Sustainability Engineering", says Prof. Dr Jürgen Becker from the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology and Secretary General of CLUSTER. These international graduate schools each will comprise 10 to 15 doctoral thesis projects, each of which will involve two to four SE3P universities from Europe and China.

Searching for Partners in China

During an international conference in Beijing in October, Prof. Dr Thomas E. Cowan from the Helmholtz-Zentrum Dresden-Rossendorf and Prof. Dr Thomas Kühl from the GSI Helmholtz Centre for Heavy Ion Research GmbH have campaigned for involvement in the European XFEL X-ray research laser at the Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron DESY. Cowan is spokesman and coordinator of the "Helmholtz Beamline at the European XFEL" project, which so far involves 400 scientists from 70 in-

stitutions worldwide, including also four institutions located in Beijing. Kühl already works together with two Chinese research groups that are active in the development of high-performance lasers.

Both Helmholtz scientists welcomed China's comprehensive investments in the further development of research infrastructures and in the attempts at winning back leading scientists.