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## **Association of ERC Grantees calls on European leaders to protect Horizon Europe's budget for fundamental research**

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The Association of ERC Grantees calls on European leaders to reconsider cuts to fundamental research in Europe. Current discussions of the Horizon Europe budget imply a reduction of Pillar I funding for Excellent Science, including a reduction of at least 16.6% relative to the funding requested by the ERC Scientific Council. Since 2007, the ERC has funded over 10000 individuals to lead frontier research projects throughout Europe. Their work has created new knowledge, transformed lives, and spurred innovation in Europe and beyond. The ERC is unique as a transnational funder, independent of any national political agenda, and dedicated solely to scientific excellence.

Europe's best scientists will always contribute to shaping the future of Europe through their ideas, innovation, and applications. To do this, they need intellectual freedom, a research landscape that ensures quality and rigour, and the resources to support their work. The ERC has played a key role in providing all these enabling factors, but it needs secure funding at the appropriate level to continue doing so. Both the ERC and Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions represent a crucial investment in Europe's future. For example, Uğur Sahin, CEO of the BioNTech group involved in COVID-19 vaccine development, is an ERC grantee. The Association of ERC Grantees believes that the best and brightest minds in Europe can make an outstanding contribution to European competitiveness and quality of life, by transforming the breakthrough ideas of today into the innovative products, policies and systems of tomorrow. However, Europe's scientists can deliver on this promise only if they are given the financial resources to do so.

We strongly urge all European leaders to demonstrate their commitment to fundamental research in Europe, to reverse the proposed funding cuts to the ERC, and to enable basic scientists to continue delivering their groundbreaking contributions to societal progress, in Europe and beyond.

**Note:** *The Association of ERC Grantees (AERG: [www.aerg.eu](http://www.aerg.eu)) is a non-profit international organisation based in Brussels. Its constituency comprises the current and previous holders of a grant from the European Research Council — about 10000 outstanding scientists from all over Europe. Its core goals are to connect ERC Grantees, to communicate the results of their work to the general public, to policy makers and to relevant stakeholders, and to advocate for the importance of fundamental research in knowledge-based societies. This statement has been approved by the AERG Board.*