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EU Investment Plan Must Not Come at Expense of Research in Europe

To combat the effects of the global economic and financial crisis in Europe, the European Commission has announced a new investment programme. The plan is to enable investments of about 315 billion euros, for example in information, energy and transport infrastructures, with guarantees from the EU budget. The programme is also explicitly framed as an investment in European research.

Additional infrastructure investments, particularly in the area of research, are welcomed by the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany. Internationally competitive research infrastructures (including information Infrastructures) are essential in order to address complex scientific issues and achieve technological advances with new innovative potential.

However, the German science organisations associated under the Alliance criticise the announced funding base of the EU investment programme. According to the ideas of the European Commission, a substantial portion of the EU guarantee should be taken from the budget of Horizon 2020. This would affect, among others, the budgets of the European Research Council (ERC) as a funder of excellent basic research, the Marie Curie Actions for the support of early-career researchers, as well as researchers' access to research infrastructures across Europe.

The European Commission hopes that the reallocation of research funding to an EU investment guarantee will enable Horizon 2020 to be of greater benefit to the real economy. From the perspective of the Alliance of Science Organisations, however, this notion is at odds with the fact that research, as a prerequisite for innovation, must be publicly funded in a special way, and that cuts to these funds would result in a performance loss for the research system.

The German science organisations associated under the Alliance are therefore calling on the European Commission to leave untouched the budget of Horizon 2020 when financing the planned investment guarantee.

The Alliance is asking the federal government of Germany to stand up for long-term reliable and adequate funding of excellent research by the EU in the EU institutions' upcoming negotiations on the new investment programme.

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