

Brussels, 12 September 2023

The Netherlands' knowledge community, represented by the Netherlands house for Education and Research - Neth-ER, is appalled by the position of the Council for the 2024 European annual budget. The position foresees substantial budget cuts to Horizon Europe, which is among the EU programmes most needed towards European open strategic autonomy. Neth-ER highly appreciated the European Parliament's position in the 2023 budget negotiations and urges the Parliament to stand up for European research and innovation (R&I) once again. In this respect, Neth-ER welcomes the Committee on Budgets' working document on Council's position on the Draft Budget 2024 by Rapporteur Mr Siegfried Mureşan.

Regrettably, Horizon Europe is – once again - one of the programmes hardest hit in the position of the Council. The persistent trend towards siphoning off funds from Horizon is completely unacceptable and should come to a halt as soon as possible. This is of the utmost importance to reverse the weakening of support for core policy priorities of the EU – the twin transition and open strategic autonomy. In order to reach closer to these goals, the EU urgently needs a diverse array of ground breaking research projects, a fresh impetus to industrial, sustainable innovation, more attention to digital skills and increased health resilience. Ultimately, stable and adequate investments in research, innovation as well as education are essential to stay afloat in the current era of heightened geopolitical competition for knowledge.

The Council refers to the need to take a prudent approach in the annual budget, so as to provide a realistic absorption capacity for each programme. This logic does not at all apply to Horizon Europe. In fact, the programme has been over-subscribed for years, which was recently confirmed in the analysis on the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2025-2027 by the European Commission<sup>1</sup>. This showed that the programme needed a staggering additional amount of 34 billion euros in 2021 and 2022 alone to fund all eligible project proposals passing the applicable quality thresholds. Sustaining the proposed cuts to Horizon Europe would further increase the already tight budgetary constraints, which are expected to consolidate in the second half of the programme.

The approach taken by the Council would deprive researchers, innovators and industry, especially SMEs, of the stability they need to contribute to the EU's strategic objectives. Delay on the green, digital, industrial, health and open strategic autonomy agendas is the least the Union currently needs in the midst of the polycrisis with which the EU is confronted. We call upon you to make sure that the research, innovation and education sector gets the attention, investment and support that it needs and deserves. Ensuring a sufficiently knowledge-intensive annual budget for 2024 becomes all the more important against the background of the upcoming negotiations on the revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework. We therefore ask you to negotiate a budget for Horizon Europe that is at least corresponding to the amount as proposed by the Commission, and to similarly protect the annual budget for Erasmus+.

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<sup>1</sup> [Horizon Europe strategic plan 2025-2027 analysis](#), European Commission.