



A physical challenge

Horizon 2020 must demonstrate a commitment to developing a knowledge-based society in Europe, argue David Lee, Luisa Cifarelli and John Dudley, of the EPS...

In 2001, the European Physical Society (EPS) interviewed Philippe Busquin, the then European Commissioner for Research.¹ At that time, the European Union was in the process of elaborating the European Research Area, which recognised that investment in scientific research and education is essential for sustainable economic development. More than a decade later, in the midst of a severe economic crisis, the entire scientific community is calling upon policymakers to remember these visionary initiatives and to maintain the budget for research in Horizon 2020.

Joining other European organisations, such as the European Research Council, the European Round Table of Industrialists, the Initiative for Science and Europe, and LERU, the EPS has published a statement, entitled 'On research and education opportunities for innovation in Horizon 2020'.² The statement highlights that: 'Investment in scientific research and education is essential for sustainable economic development. Achieving this requires a firm commitment from the European Union, and each country in Europe, to continue to invest in scientific education and research, and to work to implement a unified research policy.'

Horizon 2020 must recognise, leaving no room for any doubt, that it is basic scientific knowledge that provides the seed for technological development and economic growth, and that refocusing Europe as a knowledge-based society is the best way to deal with present and future social and economic challenges.

It is with these ambitions in mind that EPS provides the channels and resources for the physics

community to communicate to policymakers and the general public, highlighting the role of physics in everyday life.

For example, in 2011, the society started a programme to recognise historic sites that have been significant in the development of physics and scientific culture in Europe, including the Centro Fermi in Rome, where the crucial role of hydrogenous substances on neutron-induced radioactivity was discovered.³

A further, worldwide initiative the EPS is coordinating is to declare 2015 as the International Year of Light, which will demonstrate to the citizens of the world the importance of light and optical technologies in their lives, for their futures, and for the development of society.⁴

Horizon 2020 offers both policymakers and researchers the opportunity to acknowledge and expand Europe's scientific and technological prowess. It has the potential to build on the continent's strengths and address its weaknesses. Investment in research is imperative to support economic growth, and underlines Europe's commitment to its future.⁵



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¹ Europhysics News, 32/3, 2001 p. 92

² www.eps.org/resource/collection/AED45A71-4976-4F3F-9283-700C111FBB3F/EPS_statement_H2020.pdf

³ www.eps.org/?page=distinction_sites

⁴ www.eps.org/?page=event_ijol

⁵ http://c.ygcdn.com/sites/www.eps.org/resource/collection/AED45A71-4976-4F3F-9283-700C111FBB3F/EPS_statement_H2020.pdf