

Cover Letter – Horizon Europe and Beyond – Update 2024

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Crisis. At this point you might say the term is losing its sense of urgency because of its frequent use. Globally, we are experiencing many crises all at once. The same goes for the European Union: we are struggling to find answers to the climate crisis, the housing crisis, a crisis of trust in and around many government levels, rising geopolitical tensions, reduction of industrial competitiveness, and even a possible escalation of the war raging on in Europe.

There is one resource that enables us to deal with these challenges: knowledge. In nearly all these circumstances, knowledge can bring us closer to a solution. Through research and innovation we increase our chances of solving global challenges and maintain wellbeing and economic prosperity for our continent.

In Europe, the foundation for finding solutions has already been laid. Europe's researchers and universities are among the world's best. Collaboration, both internationally as well as across disciplines, is woven into Europe's academic DNA. Horizon Europe and preceding Framework Programmes provide ample proof of this, and these programmes have actively contributed to the welfare and wellbeing of our continent and its citizens.

Yet, this foundation is now under threat. Even the notion that a sharp increase of the Framework Programme's budget, let alone its existence, could be a point of discussion is incredibly alarming and puts Europe's competitiveness at risk. One need only read the reports by European experts like Letta, Draghi, and the Heitor Group to understand: investing in knowledge is the only way forward for this Union.

For this reason, Dutch universities and university medical centres are calling on anyone with ambitions towards a stronger, more sustainable and thriving Europe, to join this plea for better and structural funding for research and innovation. The Horizon framework programmes have always delivered on their promise. A strong successor –'Horizon Forward' would be an apt title – will be a key asset in making the European Union the most successful example of transnational cooperation. The time to act is now. There is really only one viable strategy, and that is doubling down on the best research funding this continent has ever seen.