



Ministry of General Affairs
The Prime Minister

Ministry of Finance
Mr W.B. Hoekstra, Minister

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr S.A. Blok, Minister

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The Netherlands

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Concerns: outcome negotiations MFF 2021-2027 European Union / position of research and innovation

Dear Mr Rutte, dear Mr Hoekstra, dear Mr Blok,

On 29 August 2019, the entire Knowledge Coalition sent you an open letter in which it asked you to make every effort during the discussions about the Multiannual Financial Framework for the European Union for the years 2021-2027 (MFF) to realise a modern MFF with considerable attention for research and innovation to strengthen the strategic positioning of the Netherlands and the EU in the area of knowledge and innovation.

The fact that the European Member States managed to provide a joint answer during this coronavirus crisis is a major step forwards and important for our future. The agreement about the recovery fund and the MFF reached at the end of July was a historic outcome after tough negotiations, not in the least for the Netherlands. However, this does not detract from the fact that considerable compromises had to be made regarding the ambitions for research and innovation, which are also important for that same future. The scrapping of €13.5 billion from the proposed budget for Horizon Europe is harmful for the international position of the European knowledge economy and, in particular, that of the Netherlands. It is expected that the Netherlands will once again be a net recipient of research grants and subsidies for public-private partnerships from Horizon Europe. Also in the last round of the current framework programme, Horizon 2020, the Netherlands once again belonged to the top-three countries with the most successful grant applications. So far the Netherlands has received a total of €4.3 billion in funding from Horizon 2020. Furthermore, according to research from the European Commission¹, the economic impact of these grants and subsidies is a factor of 6 to 8 per euro invested. In brief, scrapping €13.5 billion from the proposed budget for Horizon Europe is not a good outcome of the negotiations for either Europe or the Netherlands.

The European Parliament has expressed its disappointment about this outcome (Resolution number P9_TA(2020)0206) and has called for large investments in research and innovation. As the Dutch Knowledge Coalition, we express our support for extra funds for research and innovation in the MFF in the context of the talks between the European Parliament, European Commission and the European Council. A commitment to research and innovation means a strong

¹ European Commission (2018) – A New Horizon for Europe.

support of our competitive position and ambitions in the areas of digitalisation, climate change and health. For the future of Europe and the Netherlands, it is important that we do not lose sight of these long-term ambitions, also not in the complexity of a comprehensive European agreement.

Furthermore, you are now formulating your efforts for the national plan for the COVID-19 recovery fund. We call upon you (in line with the country-specific recommendations) to fully involve research and innovation in the circa €5 billion that the Netherlands may deploy in the national plan for the COVID-19 recovery fund Next Generation EU.

We also call upon you to make research and innovation a priority in your talks about new MFF proposals from the European Parliament. Finally, with this letter, we urgently request you to fully involve research and innovation in the realisation of the Dutch national plan for the recovery fund Next Generation EU.

Yours faithfully,

also on behalf of the Knowledge Coalition partners Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), Dutch Research Council (NWO), Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU), Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, TO2 Federation, Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW) and Royal Association MKB-Nederland,



Prof. C.C.A.M. Gielen

Copy sent to:

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

The Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport

State Secretary for Economic Affairs and Climate Policy

The Netherlands Permanent Representative to the EU

The Dutch House of Representatives: Finance Committee, Education, Culture and Science Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee, and Economic Affairs and Climate Policy Committee