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Attention: Newsdesks / Science / Education correspondents

For Immediate Release

EFSI outcome a 'mixed bag' for Universities and Research

The European University Association (EUA) has today, Friday, branded the outcome of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) a 'mixed bag' for universities and research following the agreement reached by European institutions.

The agreement restores the funding levels for fundamental research, with the European Research Council, Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions as well as pillar 4 "Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation" completely protected from cuts.

Protecting fundamental research has been at the core of EUA's demands and of high importance for EUA's membership. The Association also welcomes the efforts of the European Parliament to defend this stance in the negotiation.

However, EUA expresses its disappointment that the overall budget for Horizon 2020 emerges from the deal with €2.2 billion less than originally agreed in the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework. EUA is particularly concerned by the signal that this development sends to public authorities in Europe in relation to the importance of funding research. Investing for the future is paramount and cannot be done without involving universities. Investing in higher education and research requires direct financial transfers rather than financial instruments.

For the past six months, EUA has consistently advocated the protection of Horizon 2020 from cuts that would penalise Europe's universities. Indeed, while EFSI is also promoted as an instrument fostering research and innovation, it is unlikely that universities directly benefit from it. In most European countries, they are unable to make use of a financial tool offering loans rather than grants (see [EUA's policy brief on EFSI](#)).

Lesley Wilson, EUA Secretary General said:

"On the one hand it is a relief that the concerns of the universities, through EUA's campaign, have been heard, and that funding for basic research has been ring-fenced.

"However we now call on the Member States to live up to their commitment to limit the impact of these cuts as far as possible during each annual budgetary procedure. This will be essential to mitigate the wrong signal sent so far to Europe's research community."

ENDS

Notes:

1. The European Commission's initial proposal had planned a €2.7 billion cut to the Horizon 2020 programme. A deal was made to moderate cuts to Horizon 2020, down to €2.2 billion. This was

achieved by re-allocating so-called “unused margins” from the 2014 and 2015 EU budgets. In this context, the European Commission also released its first EU draft budget for 2016 last week. EUA notes a general decrease of about 2% for Horizon 2020 as a whole, compared with 2015 allocations, and within this a worrying decrease of over 7% for the European Research Council. The deal on EFSI should affect this provisional allocation and a new draft budget is expected to take these changes into account.

2. The compromise on EFSI still has to be formally adopted by a vote in the European Parliament on 24 June and the Council of Ministers on 19 June.

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The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.