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## EU science budget threatened

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A leading scientist has called on Europe's research community to speak out against proposals to substantially cut a [planned increase](#) in the European Union research budget for 2007–2013 ahead of a key EU summit on June 16.

Helga Nowotny, head of the European Research Advisory Board (EURAB), an independent body advising the European Commission, called on scientists to support a push to double the research budget for [Framework Programme 7](#) (FP7), saying it was "an absolute minimum target to accomplish the challenges for European research."

Nowotny's appeal comes after Luxembourg, which currently holds the rotating EU presidency, [proposed](#) slashing the planned doubling of the European Commission's research budget by between 69% and 45%.

Nowotny said the cuts would leave an increase that would be too small to help Europe catch up in science. In a statement on behalf of EURAB, she said that a lack of money already meant that many high-quality proposals cannot be funded.

"This would be a severe blow to the goal of sustainable knowledge-based growth, hamper the desperately needed improvement in employment, and engender dismal consequences for research and innovation in Europe," Nowotny said.

The proposed reduction in the research budget for FP7 comes after six countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Austria, and the Netherlands, said that national governments' payments to the European Union should be limited to 1% of total EU gross national income. The European Commission had asked for an increase to 1.24%, largely to fund extra spending on research. The compromise brokered by Luxembourg foresees a limit of 1.06 %.

Carol Featherstone, spokeswoman for the European Life Scientist Organization, said the current Luxembourg proposals would hurt plans to establish a [European Research Council](#) (ERC). "The ERC would need a substantial amount of funding to get off the ground. If it has to start with a smaller budget, it will reduce its impact," she said. "Governments are always saying how vital research is to Europe's future, but they seem to continue to be reluctant to put money into research."

Antonia Mochan, European Commission science spokesperson, confirmed that the commission was also worried about the research budget. "We are not at all sure that we will get everything we ask for. We have reason to fear that a proposal to significantly increase the budget for research won't be accepted. There is a real concern for research and that countries are not looking to the future," she told *The Scientist*.

Nowotny called on scientists to organize a lobby group ahead of a key European Council meeting on June 16–17, when the size of the budget for research is due to be decided by the heads of national governments. "It is time to act together and to take a firm public stand on the tremendous potential of science in Europe," she said in a letter circulated among scientists in Europe.

Nowotny's letter can be obtained from [Isidoros.Karatzas@cec.eu.int](mailto:Isidoros.Karatzas@cec.eu.int)

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