

European Academies



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Minister Mauri Pekkarinen,
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From the EASAC Chairman, Professor David Spearman
18 July 2006

Dear Minister Pekkarinen,

As the Chairman of the European Academies Science Advisory Council, established by and representative of the national science academies of the European Union, I am writing to appeal to the Council of Ministers to reach agreement on the budget for Framework 7 at its meeting on 24 July. A failure to do so could be seriously damaging to European research.

In particular we appeal to the Council to endorse the position on the use of Framework 7 funding for scientific and medical research on human embryonic stem cells that was agreed by the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy. The Committee agreed that funding could be allowed for scientific and medical research on stem cells derived from early human embryos that are left over from fertility treatments, in those countries in which national laws and regulations permit such studies. No country is obliged to undertake or permit such research if it does not wish to do so. We believe that this position, agreed after extensive debate and consultation, properly respects the rights of individual nations to make their own decisions about the regulation of scientific and medical research on human embryonic stem cells, and is an entirely appropriate application of the principle of subsidiarity, as national regulations vary between Member States.

If the Framework 7 budget is blocked by nations opposed to scientific and medical research on human embryonic stem cells, this would have two seriously detrimental effects. Firstly, it would delay approval for the entire Framework 7 budget, thereby threatening research across all disciplines and hence the competitiveness of the European Union. Secondly, it would violate the principle of subsidiarity for stem cell research that is recognised by the international scientific community, as demonstrated by the statement on cloning technology in 2003 by the InterAcademy Panel, representing the world's national academies of science (copy enclosed).

We do not believe that it is in the interests of any of the Member States for there to be a delay in the approval of the Framework 7 budget at this stage.

Yours sincerely,

David Spaman