

European scientists protest austerity measures and offer dire warnings of impact

October 9 2014, by Bob Yirka



Credit: Petr Kratochvil/Public Domain

(Phys.org) —European scientists are extremely worried about the future of research in Europe—many of the countries that make up Europe are experiencing financial difficulties and those that belong to the European Union have been forced to take some dramatic steps to balance budgets. Such cost cutting schemes have been labeled across the continent as "austerity measures." One of those sectors has been public research

centers. The result has been a diminishing research capacity, particularly in those countries that have been hardest hit, such as Spain, Greece and Italy. Now, scientists from across Europe, and the U.S. have banded together and written an [open letter](#) (which can be signed by supporters) to officials within the European Union and individual countries, denouncing the cuts and pointing out how cuts to research will only undermine the future of Europe as a whole. They suggest officials consider more carefully the damaging impact of austerity measures and what it may mean for the future.

Amaya Moro-Martin, an astrophysicist with the Space Telescope Science Institute in the U.S. (and member of the governing board of Euroscience and one of the writers of the open letter) has published a World View Column in the journal *Nature*, supporting the scientists in Europe and calling out those European officials who have been pushing for austerity measures in the research community for their lack of support for continued research. She also offers some stark examples, noting that public research funding in Italy has dropped to zero in Italy and is just half of what it once was in Greece. In Spain, researchers who retire are not being replaced. She suggests policy makers "have completely lost touch with the reality of research." Not only is research suffering, she points out, but so is opportunity—without a place to work, European scientists will be forced to migrate to other countries or simply find another career field, which of course, would represent a severe brain drain. She and the other scientists also point out that funneling general research funds into applied research, which officials have suggested, won't work either as it ignores how the science process works. Without, theoretical research, they note, applied research would very soon run out of steam.

The main point Moro-Martin and the scientists in Europe are trying to make is that if [research](#) stops, so too will innovation, which in the end is what drives economies forward. Without it, [countries](#) and perhaps the

EU as a whole will find stagnation, rather than growth.

More information: A call to those who care about Europe's science, *Nature*, www.nature.com/news/a-call-to-...-pe-s-science-1.16086

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