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RESPONSE FROM THE YOUNG ACADEMY OF SWEDEN TO THE OPEN CONSULTATION ON THE ERA FRAMEWORK: AREAS OF UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA (ERA)

Curiosity-driven science, originating in mankind's insatiable desire for knowledge, has for centuries contributed to the development and prosperity of EU countries on a scale that is hard to overestimate. However, in an increasingly competitive global scientific arena – a development we welcome with enthusiasm – intensified efforts will be required to maintain, or regain, Europe's position as a global leader in Science. The Young Academy of Sweden believes that four key principles will be paramount in guiding this effort.

1. Curiosity
2. Mobility
3. Leadership
4. Stability

CURIOSITY

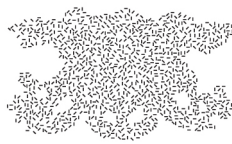
We believe that the way to increased scientific breakthroughs at EU research institutions is through project grants supporting curiosity-driven research in all academic fields, including the humanities and social sciences. Too many EU research programmes are tied to specific goals defined many years earlier by committees composed of only a limited number of scientists. We cannot allow the curiosity of present and future generations of scientists to be determined and limited by the priorities and expectations of a minority of their predecessors. While targeted research may have a role in programmes directly connected to industry, it cannot provide the foundation for the most innovative research, which relies on unexpected breakthroughs. It is therefore crucial that future Framework Programs set aside much larger funds for curiosity-driven projects and that the European Research Council receive a substantial increase in resources in order to both intensify and broaden its efforts in funding curiosity-driven research.

MOBILITY

Science knows no borders, but scientists do. In Europe those borders are less obvious today than 50 years ago, but they still exist and hamper mobility to a much larger extent than, for instance, in the case of the US. While mobility is encouraged by, for example, the EU-wide Marie Curie programmes, most of the funding within the EU is fragmented into entirely *national* research areas, with each national funding agency having its own set of written, and unwritten, practices, eligibility requirements and evaluation criteria. The high cost associated with understanding this fragmented landscape hurts mobility, but could be significantly lowered if the ERC and the

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national funding agencies worked towards greater harmonization. In their private life, young scientists must often combine their career with that of their spouse and also with raising a family. Social security differs from country to country within the EU and it is generally quite difficult for researchers to fully anticipate the economic consequences of moving within the EU. The social security systems within the EU therefore needs to be reformed to facilitate mobility of researchers and their families. Transparent and supportive systems will stimulate knowledge transfer within the EU and the competitiveness of European research will benefit greatly.

LEADERSHIP

While any society is founded on institutions, law, and social contracts, its survival relies on each generation creating the conditions for the next generation to assume leadership in its turn. A society cannot prosper merely by preserving the status quo; it thrives only by constantly reinventing itself and reformulating its *raison d'être*. If the EU scientific community wishes to remain relevant in a global arena it must commit itself to nurturing and supporting the next generation of EU scientific leaders. The Advanced Investigator Grants and the Starting Grant provide one way of rewarding and encouraging true scientific leadership. These programmes should both be expanded and supplemented by similar, individually evaluated grants targeted at different periods in a scientist's career.

STABILITY

In order to secure the future recruitment of our most promising talents to a career in research, the employment structure of the EU scientific community must show a higher degree of predictability, transparency and security. The current situation – where many younger researchers go from one temporary employment to another, and many do not obtain a permanent position until 10–15 years after their first degree – is not sustainable. While models of functional tenure-track systems are available in several EU countries, such models are still far from universal. This lack of stability has devastating effects on the present and future recruitment of top talent to research. In the end, this will inevitably affect the quality of research in the EU.

The Young Academy of Sweden is a recently formed independent organisation consisting of 22 of the most talented young researchers in Sweden within all scientific fields (up to approximately 10 years after PhD). The initiative to start the Young Academy of Sweden was taken by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. For more information: www.kva.se/sverigesungaakademi.