

Just as our government is pondering implementation of knowledge economy, there is a real threat that research funding for 2011 – 2015 will be radically cut by 30 percent in favor of highway construction.

The government's intention to transfer a large portion of funds from the Operational Program Research and Development to highway construction is in sharp contradiction with the proclaimed goal of creating a knowledge economy. It threatens the survival of Slovakia's best research and is at the same time in contradiction with the recently adopted strategy Europe 2020. Despite all of its administrative problems and flaws, Operational Program Research and Development is the only functioning competitive source of science financing in Slovakia. While, in addition to receiving funding from structural funds, other areas are financed much more generously also from other public sources, the development of Slovak science, research and innovation is dependent solely on this source of funding. Cutting funding from Operational program Research and Development will have negative impact on science financing until 2020, as it will certainly decrease future science funding from structural funds, as well as damage the quality of higher education. As citizens who are not indifferent to the future of the Slovak society and economy, we call upon the officials on both the national and European level to prevent this threat.

Without new knowledge from research and development, there is deficiency of impulses to increase competitiveness of the private sector. Investments in science are the basic precondition for the advancement of a developed economy. This sphere has been undernourished in Slovakia for a long time. In this respect, we only bear comparison with countries such as Bulgaria and Romania, although, according to the recent data, these countries have now overtaken us, and Slovakia, with its rate of R&D spending at 0,48% of GDP, is now at the bottom of the European Union. European structural funds are the dominant source of vitally important investment in Slovak science. Structural funds are not the ideal type of science financing, but there are no alternative public sources of funding of equal size and significance in Slovakia. Although the development of transport infrastructure is needed, this unsystematic measure threatens further advancement of Slovak science, which has so far achieved many world-class results in spite of the difficult conditions.

Investments in science from Operational Program Research and Development would have enabled Slovak research teams to join top international research projects and gain access to other funding sources. We are stopping this process halfway, and impact of the investment already made from Operational Program Research and Development will not materialize. The planned reallocation from Operational Program Research and Development to highway construction will have long-term negative impact on science, research, and innovation in Slovakia. Decisions will soon be made about allocation of structural funds for 2014-2020. The Slovak government will not be able to argue for a funding increase for science, research, and innovation in the next seven-year EU budget, if it is now arguing that it cannot utilize even the current research funds. Thus this looming unsystematic and wrong decision can halt the advancement of Slovak science for a whole decade.

The negative impact will surely affect the quality of higher education, as it is directly interlinked with science. This will send out the wrong signal to all the young men and women who are now deciding about their future career. When higher education and research are clearly not among our priorities, it is a clear sign for the young generation that they should be looking for educational and career opportunities abroad.

As citizens of the Slovak Republic who are not indifferent to sustainable development of the Slovak society and economy, prosperity and quality of life, we call upon the officials on both the national and European level to prevent this flawed decision with long-term and lasting negative impact on future development of Slovakia, and intent contradictory to that of European development priorities defined in the strategy Europe 2020.