

Nobel Prize Laureates

Professor Gérard Mourou

Ecole Polytechnique
Route de Saclay
91128 PALAISEAU Cedex

Professor Stefan W. Hell

Max-Planck-Institut
für biophysikalische Chemie
Am Faßberg 11
37077 Göttingen

Professor Theodor W. Hänsch

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Schellingstr. 4
80799 München

20th December 2018

Commissioner Carlos Moedas,
Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation
Commissioner Mariya Gabriel,
Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society

Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

**An Open Letter to the European Commission regarding
the Absence of Visibility and Support for Photonics Technologies in the next MFF 2021-2027**

Dear Commissioner Moedas
Dear Commissioner Gabriel

The European Commission's Horizon 2020 Programme is acknowledged as a vital cornerstone of European competitiveness, underpinning and advancing globally recognized European science and technology for the economic and societal benefit of European citizens.

Moreover, the recent European Commission focus on key enabling technologies has been important in ensuring the translation of European science into technology and innovative European products. In particular, photonics has been widely recognised as a Key Enabling Technology and one of the critical components of several European strategic value chains. In addition, a photonics capacity is vital to European sovereign security interests.

As a consequence of the explicit focus on and support for Photonics in the current Horizon 2020 programme, Europe now has a world-leading position and outstanding excellence in photonics science and technology. The number of European Nobel Prizes awarded in the field of photonics and photonics enabled-sciences is only one indication to illustrate this.

It is therefore with the deepest concern that we observe that Photonics does not appear to remain a priority of the European Commission, as reflected in the current draft of the future Commission Horizon Europe programme. Photonics technologies are simply absent from the list of nine priority areas of intervention for the future Commission within the Horizon Europe cluster on Industry and Digital. This is all the more extraordinary given the recent 2018 European Commission and European Investment Bank report on “Financing the digital transformation: Unlocking the value of photonics and microelectronics” states that “..the Photonics sector is an essential key enabling technology and represents an important building block of the next digital revolution, which will be based on deep technologies”

We, three European Nobel prize-winners, working and living in Europe, firmly believe that it would be a serious strategic mistake to remove Photonics from a technologies priority list, which now includes only materials, robotics and electronics. There is no scientific, technological or industry policy rationale for such a decision. Photonics is simply essential for powering the future European digital economy and will underpin as yet undiscovered advances in many other sectors such as health, space, mobility and security. We therefore reiterate the importance of empowering a vibrant European photonics industry and research community, as a specific visible objective across and within the new Horizon Europe program, for a future competitive, secure and independent European Union. We explicitly call on the European Commission, to reconsider the current draft programming for the Cluster on Industry and Digital within the future Horizon programme and include photonics as the tenth area of intervention, the tenth technology priority, in this industry cluster.

We look forward to the opportunity to discuss this with you and to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Gérard Mourou

Nobel Laureate in Physics 2018



Stefan W. Hell

Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 2014



Theodor W. Hänsch

Nobel Laureate in Physics 2005