

## **EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

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# Major investment for an EU scientific research hub in Romania gets the go ahead

Support for a cutting edge research facility that will involve 40 research and academic institutions from 13 Member States was today approved by the European Commission.

The financial contribution from the EU would come from the Structural Funds with an investment of almost EUR 180 million. It is part of a wider initiative with the Czech Republic and Hungary to make up a pioneering European research consortium.

Commenting on the decision, Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn said "This is exactly the type of project we want to see more of in the future. It is aimed at boosting research and innovation with a clear EU added value, to ensure that each and every Euro is wisely spent."

The part of the project approved today will be established in Romania. Known as "Extreme Light Infrastructure – Nuclear Physics", ELI-NP will serve as a pan European laboratory. It will host a broad range of scientific disciplines. These will include: ground- breaking fundamental physics, new nuclear physics and astrophysics as well as material science and life sciences. Researchers will also be working on new ways to handle nuclear materials and radioactive waste.

The project aims to promote national and European research by creating an internationally-renowned research infrastructure, open to specialists from the academic and private scientific sphere, as well as the business sector.

Commissioner Hahn added, "We have very high hopes for the ELI-NP project. Through it, Romania has a chance to put itself firmly on the map of European research, to retain highly-specialised workers - reversing the 'brain drain' and attracting new companies to the region."

Romania is currently investing only 0.5% of GDP in research and development (R&D) across the public and private sector. It has a Europe 2020 target of 2% of GDP, in the context of an EU-wide headline target of 3%. ELI-NP is expected to give a much-needed boost to research and development in Romania, helping the country to bridge the innovation gap and foster knowledge and technology transfer. This project is also expected to considerably enhance the attractiveness of Romania as a location for research excellence and innovation.

The EU side of the investment comes through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) co-financed programme "Increase of Economic Competitiveness". The project aims to improve Romania's research capacity and stimulate technology transfer between research and development institutions and enterprises, giving the country a competitive edge and putting it on the right track to smart growth.



Today's decision approves the ERDF contribution for the 1st phase of ELI-NP over the years 2011-2015, while the total cost of the project amounts to € 356.2 million.

## **Background:**

This is a so-called "major project", of which the total public funding is above €50 million and thus subject to a specific decision by the European Commission, whereas other types of projects are approved at national or regional levels.

ELI-NP is one part of the "Extreme Light Infrastructure", which was identified in 2006 by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure (ESFRI) as one of the top priority projects of research infrastructure for Europe. The project is the second pillar of a pan-European Laser facility - the Commission approved €236 million in funding for the first ELI pillar in the Czech Republic, in April 2011.

During the project implementation (2010-2016), representatives of the host countries (Czech Republic, Romania and Hungary) will constitute an European Research Infrastructure Consortium. It will be the first pan-European multidisciplinary network to research the potential of state-of- the art laser technology.

The organisation behind the project is the 'Horia Hulubei National Institute of Physics and Nuclear Engineering' (IFIN-HH); ELI-NP is based in the area of Măgurele (South of Bucharest) and is expected to be operational in 2015.

## More information:

www.extreme-light-infrastructure.eu/
EU-funded 'Major Projects'
EU cohesion policy in Romania

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