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To: IDCsecretariat@djei.ie
CC: [REDACTED]
Date: 09/03/2015 16:06:41
Subject: a comment on consultation paper for science /technology

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have read the consultation paper for successor on strategy for science, technology, and innovation, as presented at <http://www.heai.ie/news/consultation-paper-successor-strategy-science-technology-and-innovation>. I would like to say that I am completely and utterly perplexed by some of the statements it makes. It opens with an introduction stating "Research Prioritisation did not represent a move away from funding basic research.", and further, when discussing Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), it states that "SFI invests in academic researchers and research teams who are most likely to generate new knowledge, leading edge technologies and competitive enterprises in the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)". These statements, when applied to the context of maths specifically, represent either a grave misconception or an intentional lie. Since 2012, Science Foundation Ireland has been systematically demonstrating that basic research in mathematics has no place in their vision of the future of Ireland. Basic research is something that cannot be measured in immediate impact, something that cannot be commercialised right away. Some aspects of number theory, deemed to be infinitely far from applications in 1930s-1950s, found demand from 1980s onwards, once their importance in cryptography for estimating reliability of various encryption systems has been discovered. This situation, when hunt for real life applications and impact lasts for several decades, exceeding time in office of any administrator and politician, places pure mathematics in a very difficult place. It is a direct responsibility of the Irish Government to ensure that support for basic research without immediate impact is not cut off completely. Currently, with the proposals in pure maths being systematically rejected by the SFI for the lack of immediate impact, while completely ignoring the long term consequences of that, both pure and applied science in Ireland is under threat. Similar situations with basic research funding can be observed in other areas. By proceeding in this direction, Ireland has no chance for either being competitive as a research state, or sustaining long term international collaborations in the long term. Both Science Foundation Ireland and Irish Research Council seem to focus almost completely on commercialisation, both directly, and through the pool of reviewers that they select to evaluate the submitted proposals. It is crucial that Ireland re-evaluates this approach in order to have a less grim perspective for its research environment in a couple of decades from now.

Regards,
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ATTACHMENTS: