

OPEN LETTER FROM THE ELI-NP RESEARCHERS

In view of the denigrating messages which recently appeared in some of the Romanian media at the address of the ELI-NP Research Center and its Management, we, the undersigned ELI-NP researchers, protest against these attempts to discredit us, and state through the present letter our support for the ELI-NP Management, and in particular for the project Director, Academician N.V. Zamfir.

The ELI-NP Center includes the most powerful lasers in the world (2x10 Petawatt) and a variable energy gamma-ray beam system, being the most advanced research facility worldwide in the field of nuclear photonics. This is a new field of interdisciplinary research, which for the first time brings together light of extreme intensity and energy, with nuclear physics.

The Center has been built with European and Romanian funds, following a consensus of the international scientific community that research in the field of nuclear photonics will lead to revolutionary discoveries in fundamental and applied research. Romania has been selected to host this project, mainly due to the nuclear physics expertise at the IFIN-HH research institute, the institution which implemented ELI-NP. The ELI-NP Center offers Romania the unique chance of reaching the top of the most advanced scientific research in the world and of generating fundamental and applied discoveries with major societal impact.

The design and construction of a top facility in an entirely new scientific field is a huge and extremely difficult task for any country in the world. In Romania, this task has been difficult also because of the limited technological infrastructure, the limited number of researchers and engineers with experience in all necessary areas, and not in the least due to the complexity of the public acquisition mechanisms. Despite all these, the ELI-NP project is already a major success. The experimental and administrative buildings have been finalized a few years ago, the lasers have demonstrated world record power, over the initial specifications, the most complex laser beam transport system in the world is being brought into operation, and the first Experimental Areas have started operation and exploratory experiments. The gamma beam system has been recently re-contracted, with the full facility to become operational by the end of 2022. During visits at ELI-NP, top scientists in the world and leaders of international scientific programs have expressed their admiration for this success and their enthusiasm for participating in the research which starts at ELI-NP.

In addition, one of the greatest successes of the ELI-NP project has been attracting talented young people. A phenomenon which plagued for already too long the Romanian research is the departure of valuable young people from Romania. ELI-NP has successfully reduced this phenomenon by offering work conditions and perspectives at the level of any large research laboratory in the world. Moreover, ELI-NP has succeeded in attracting a large number of foreign researchers who contribute with their expertise to the construction of the Romanian research center.

We, the undersigned ELI-NP researchers, consider that this unique project in Romania is a success of our work. In particular, we consider that the firm and visionary leadership of the project by Director N.V. Zamfir, which allowed us to solve, over time, the multitude of technical, scientific, programmatic, and even political difficulties unavoidable in a project of this magnitude, has been, and continues to be essential. The critiques which begin to circulate in some of the Romanian media are, to our opinion, not

grounded in reality and unjust. We reiterate that the implementation of a project of this magnitude, in time and on budget, would have been a huge achievement for any country in the world.

In conclusion, we appreciate that a united team has formed in time between the researchers and the project Management at ELI-NP, which acts with diligence and responsibility towards achieving the project objectives. It is vital that this team continues its activity in order to successfully finalize this project of unique complexity and difficulty, but also of unique value for Romania and for the international scientific community.

Lastly, we wish to express in this letter also our regret for the decision of the ELI Delivery Consortium (ELI-DC) not to include ELI-NP in the proposal for the creation of a European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ELI-ERIC). In agreement with the ELI-NP management position (see www.eli-np.ro/documents/ELI_ERIC_may_2020.pdf), we consider that ELI-NP is at a similar level of implementation with the other ELI facilities, and that without ELI-NP the ELI-ERIC research infrastructure will be incomplete and will not be able to serve its users as it has been initially planned. We therefore expect that ELI-DC reconsiders its position and will include our facility in the ELI-ERIC. Ultimately, we are convinced that the European Commission will take into consideration the arguments of Romania and will make a proper decision for the ELI-ERIC.

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