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Deputy Minister of Education and Science
Prof. Ivan Dimov

Director of Science Directorate
Dr. Milena Damyanova

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Dear Deputy Minister Dimov,

Thank you for your interest in the Extreme Light Infrastructure (ELI) ERIC and agreeing to meet us in Sofia on March 21 to discuss Bulgaria's membership. The expression of interest from your scientific community, who have already developed a consortium of four leading institutions, is welcome and impressive. Please allow me to outline possible next steps to further strengthen the collaboration between Bulgaria and ELI ERIC, and possible steps toward membership.

I would like to emphasise that membership in ELI ERIC, like in all ERICs, will be the membership of your country, Bulgaria. The decision to join is made at the ministerial level, and representatives to ELI ERIC are appointed by the ministry and may include delegates from the Ministry as well as from your scientific community.

Looking more closely at the specific situation in Bulgaria, I encourage you to consider joining ELI ERIC as a founding member or observer already this year during the establishment of ELI ERIC. This will enable Bulgaria to participate in all governance and advisory committees as other members and observers, therefore setting the initial rules and operation. To join would enable your representatives to gain experience participating in governance of Europe's most important research infrastructure in Central Europe. It will also enable the ELI-Bulgarian Consortium to participate in joint H2020 and FP9 projects of the European Commission, along with other ELI strategic partners around Europe.

Joining is a significant political commitment, and if it starts as an observer, should plan towards full membership over a two to three year period. This should allow sufficient time to allow a formal proposal of the ELI ERIC in the Bulgarian Roadmap. It also allows time to identify possible sources for future contributions to Membership, either in cash or through in-kind contributions, including the possible use of Structural Funds.

We at ELI are ready to work with your representatives and experts to build a strong scientific and socio-economic case for membership. We will also encourage scientific exchanges and collaborations. I am confident that, working together, we will be able to quickly demonstrate positive impacts for Bulgaria, as well as enable ELI ERIC to benefit from the knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm of your scientists.

Sincerely,

Carlo Rizzuto
Director General