

Good afternoon

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure to have been invited to speak before you today.

For those of you who do not know me. I am a Member of the European Parliament where I sit on the ITRE committee and the Budget committee. I am currently rapporteur for the Specific Programme implementing H2020.

Contribution of Science and Research to the Economy

The theme of our discussion is the way in which the Europe Union can add value to European science and research. Research and innovation are of prime importance in modern economies. Europe's ability to innovate and produce goods that are demanded on international markets is essential to our ability to generate growth and jobs in an increasingly competitive world.

Although budgetary considerations are of undeniable importance in the EU's ability to further these goals, it is not merely a question of budgeting or of immediately quantifiable results. The European Union has allowed for transnational

cooperation across the Member States in a way that was not imaginable even a generation ago. Indeed, much of the added value that the European Union is able to provide derives from the otherwise intangible benefits that arise from the good will and greater freedoms that we now possess. The European Union has an active role to play in making sure that we take as much advantage as possible of this opportunity.

Added Value of Science at a EU Level

More specifically, however, what, though, is the added value of organising science and research at a European level today? As I see it,

* the European Union is able to play this vital role by generating critical mass, economies of scale and by ensuring cooperation and concerted action at a trans-national level. This includes the ability to generate transnational infrastructures that simply cannot be constructed at national level with the same advantages in terms of cost-effectiveness and results.

*work undertaken at a European level will help ensure that research and innovation is not pursued in a piecemeal fashion

with scientists and researchers working in relative isolation from each other. The European Union is able to coordinate research efforts and connect different impulses and innovations in a way that Member States cannot.

*operating at a European level will enable us to face a number of major challenges, such as the ageing of the population, the fight against climate change or the security of energy supply. Once again, these challenges simply cannot be adequately confronted without scaling up to at least a European level.

*Finally, it is important that we ensure that greater efficiency and simplicity is built into a streamlined process and that we prevent the unnecessary duplication of costs at a national level. If we manage this, the organisation of research at a European level will ensure that our economies are more efficient, that they pull in the same direction and that they are less wasteful of time, money and effort.

H2020 is the concrete expression of these advantages and of our response to the challenges that we face.

H2020

H2020 is the European Union's first programme that covers the whole innovation cycle from basic research to product. In this context, there are three aspects to H2020 that are of particular importance.

*These are, firstly, the need to promote excellence and widen participation.

With regard to excellence – without any geographical or other preconditions – submission of proposals at a European level rather than at a regional or national level has the all but automatic effect of promoting excellence. The task of evaluating a whole welter of proposals and results at European level means that the sheer volume of submissions at this level necessarily results in the selection of the best propositions.

However, it is also of fundamental importance that we encourage the first sprouts of excellence. In this respect, the concept of "stairway to excellence" will enable us to create the conditions for the participation of small units of embryonic excellence, such as small research groups and highly innovative start ups. The Commission is to be applauded for its inclusion of such things as "the twinning schemes" and "ERA chairs

scheme" in its proposal as these represent concrete measures that represent real steps in the right direction.

* Secondly, there is the need to create synergies

In confronting the different challenges with which we are faced, it is particularly important that we devote attention to how best to create new and dynamic synergies. This involves the fostering of greater complementarity between Horizon 2020 and various European, national and regional financial instruments.

To further these ends, we require a multi-fund approach and strengthening of the bridges that link Horizon 2020 and other funds – with the structural funds to the fore. In this respect, the structural funds have a complementary role to play with regard to what Horizon 2020 will be able to do.

Upstream from Horizon 2020, the structural funds can be used for capacity building.

Downstream from Horizon 2020, the structural funds can help smooth the passage from conception to market. At the same time, they can also be used to co-finance certain projects.

* Thirdly the importance of societal challenges

In addition, H2020 has been designed to meet a carefully defined series of societal challenges. Horizon 2020 will tackle societal challenges by helping to bridge the gap between research and the market by, for example, helping innovative enterprises to develop their technological breakthroughs into viable products with real commercial potential. This market driven approach will include creating partnerships with the private sector and member states to bring together the resources needed.

As for the different challenges that have been identified, these include such things as health, food security, energy, transport, climate change and, finally, inclusive, innovative and secure societies.

At this point, perhaps I could mention that, in my draft report; I proposed that that last of the six key societal challenges in the original proposal be divided in two. This will give rise to a new societal challenge specifically devoted to questions connected with the social sciences and humanities. This goes in the same direction with regard to designing research in a changing world as was so eloquently expressed by Robert Jan Smits.

Conclusion and Budget

Finally, by way of conclusion, let me return to questions of budgeting. Generating the necessary critical mass requires a concerted and adequately funded effort, something that a properly conceived MFF will enable. As we embark on the next round of negotiations with the Council, I feel that if we are to attain the goals that we have set ourselves, it is necessary that we give ourselves the means to achieve these ends. This supposes, not only that we have a clear idea of our priorities and that we are able to plan how best to organise these priorities in as simple and flexible a manner as possible. It also means that we obtain the support of the different European governments – especially those with a reputation for academic and scientific excellence – in allocating an adequate budget for Horizon 2020. In research – as in other domains in life – you only get out what you put in!