

Good morning

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by welcoming you all and by saying that it is a great honour for me to chair this EIN Breakfast on Horizon 2020. I should also like to express my gratitude to the speakers, the rapporteur and all of you who are participating in this meeting today.

This is the third meeting of the EIN working group for EU Innovation Policy. The EIN Group aims at bringing together EPP Members, policy makers, European Foundations and EPP Study Groups. The Working Group seeks to develop action on how best to

unleash the potential for EU competitiveness through innovation.

This EIN breakfast is dedicated more particularly to examining the potential for How to make Twinning and Teaming work in Horizon 2020.

Key note speakers will be:

- Mr Jack Metthey, European Commission
- Mr Josef Koubek, Rector Emeritus, Institute of Chemical Technology Prague
- Mr Massimo Busuoli, Head, ENEA-EU Liaison Office in Brussels
- Mr Hermann Hauser, Partner, Amadeus Capital

Comments by Ms Romana Jordan, MEP

Debate moderated by Mr Richard Hudson, CEO Science&Business.

Stairway to Excellence

Horizon 2020 – the new, European framework programme for the period from 2014 to 2020 – is the single largest funding instrument of its type in the world.

Excellence – without geographical constraints – is the primary criterion for participation in Horizon 2020. Against this background, a significant innovation is the creation of “stairways to excellence” concept. This involves teaming initiatives whose objective is to establish and reinforce partnerships between regional research units, countries and leading international counterparts.

This will enable Europe to foster units of embryonic excellence, such as small research groups and highly innovative start-ups. Such stairways to excellence will be able to lever support from the Cohesion Funds and this will contribute significantly to the creation of critical mass from existing seeding grounds.

More generally, with regard to how widening excellence will be fostered, six initiatives stand out. These are:

- the teaming of excellent research institutions and low performing RDI regions with the aim of creating new (or of significantly upgrading existing) centres of excellence in low performing RDI Member States and regions.

- the twinning of research institutions in order to significantly strengthen a given field of research in an emerging institution through links with at least two other leading institutions at an international level.

- establishing 'ERA Chairs' to attract outstanding academics to institutions with a clear potential for research excellence, in order to help these institutions fully unlock this potential and, hence, create a level playing field for research and innovation in the European Research Area. In this respect, a number of possible synergies with ERC activities should be explored.

- a Policy Support Facility (PSF) to improve the design, implementation and evaluation of national or regional research and innovation policies.

- supporting access to international networks for excellent researchers and innovators who, at the moment, lack sufficient involvement in European and international networks.

- strengthening the administrative and operational capacity of transnational networks of National Contact Points, including through training, so that they are able to better provide support to potential participants.

In parallel with these measures, it is also necessary to ensure greater complementarity between Horizon 2020

and various European, national and regional financial instruments. In particular, we require a multi-fund approach and a strengthening of the bridges that link Horizon 2020 and other, available funds and most particularly the structural funds.

In this respect, the structural funds have a complementary role to play with regard to what Horizon 2020 seeks to achieve. Upstream from Horizon 2020, the structural funds can be used for capacity building. Downstream from Horizon 2020, the structural funds will help smooth the passage from conception to market.

These measures, designed to widen participation, and the successful implementation of a multi-fund approach will certainly contribute to maximize European potential to produce science and technology of excellent standards.

The Role of Universities in Smart Specialisation Strategies

Another policy of major importance is regional policy. The major objective of this policy is to support economic cohesion, reduce socio-economic disparities between the different European regions and to promote growth. Research, technological development and innovation are key aspects to regional policy and one of the main goals, in this respect, is capacity building

in the field of research and innovation. This will foster greater competitiveness at a regional level.

Research and innovation policy and regional policy should be complementary and we should seek to build bridges between the two. In the European Parliament the rapporteurs for both Horizon 2020 and the regional programmes have made provisions for greater synergies between the various programmes involved.

This entails building bridges in both directions between Horizon 2020 and the structural funds. In Horizon 2020, we have introduced the concept of "spreading excellence" and "widening participation". The goal here is to foster teaming and twinning initiatives in order to establish and reinforce

partnerships between regional research units, countries and leading international counterparts.

This will enable Europe to construct units of embryonic excellence, such as small research groups and highly innovative start-ups. Such stairways to excellence will be able to lever support from the Cohesion Funds and this will contribute significantly to the creation of critical mass from existing seeding grounds.

At the same time, we have also taken considerable care to construct bridges in the opposite direction from the structural funds to Horizon 2020. In particular, the structural funds have a complementary role to play with regard to what Horizon 2020 seeks to achieve.

Upstream from Horizon 2020, the structural funds can be used for capacity building. Downstream from Horizon 2020, the structural funds will help smooth the passage from conception to market.

In this respect, the concept of smart specialisation is key to building these bridges. Smart specialisation involves developing a vision, identifying competitive advantages and setting the priorities for research and innovation at a specifically regional level. The universities and higher education institutions have a central role to play in furthering smart specialisation strategies and, in the process, constructing in the bridges between Horizon 2020 and the structural funds in both directions.

The following report is particular timely and valuable as it gives a series of concrete recommendations about how best to involve universities and institutions of higher education in the process of furthering smart specialisation and constructing the two way bridges of which I have spoken above.