

Secretary of State,

Rectors

President of EUA

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by saying that it is a great honour for me to chair the seminar "Strategic Partnership in Research and Education" organised by the CRUP. CRUP - The Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities - is the coordinating body of higher education in Portugal and includes, as full members, all the public universities alongside the Catholic University of Portugal. As a result, it represents a significant portion of the national, higher education system.

The aim of our meeting is to promote an exchange of views and to deepen the ties between Portuguese universities, MEPs, international networks, representatives of other European universities and Members of EU institutions.

Before handing over to our speakers, let me make two brief remarks.

~ Firstly, I should like to stress the need to modernize Universities in such a way as to equip them to meet the challenges that global competition in education, research and innovation represent. At the same time, universities and other institutes of higher education are essential to the provision of the necessary skills if we are to ensure growth in Europe and meet the challenges that the present economic crisis represents. Situated at the crossroads between research, education and innovation – universities are central to strengthening our ability to compete within the knowledge society.

It is essential that Universities prepare strategies to compete at the global scene, in general, and, in particular, for a successful participation in H2020 (e.g. defining the target scientific areas, establishing national and European partnership).

~ Secondly, in the next European Budget, the European Institutions have attributed a special role to the Universities in the scope of the regional development. Universities will be crucial for the definition of the regional innovation plans (smart specialization) and will be essential partners for the enterprises

and other institutions of the region in the execution of the regional funds.

At a time where Portugal and other Member States are preparing their proposal for the priorities of the different regional funds, the exchange of views between Portuguese Universities and other Universities of Europe will be very beneficial.

These two topics are the main subject of our meeting today.

At this point, let me hand you over to our speakers. These are the Secretary of State for Portuguese Education, Mr João Filipe Queiró, José Carlos Marques dos Santos, Manuel Assunção, António Cunha, and António Rendas, all of whom are rectors of Portuguese universities. They will touch on a range of issues including the nature of Portuguese Universities, the role of universities in regional policy, the strategy of Portuguese Universities in relation to the future programme H2020 and the extent of the reforms of the Portuguese higher educational system that are already underway. The contributions from our speakers

will then be followed by a debate in which participants will have a chance to exchange their views.

It only remains for me to introduce our first speaker, Mr João Filipe Queiró

Thank you very much.