

Good afternoon

I should like to begin by saying how honoured I am to have been invited to give this key address to the EU institutions and citizens for an intergenerational fair society.

The What If conference is particularly concerned with questions of ageing as a part of a wider set of societal problems that we, in Europe, face.

This meeting is particularly timely given that the European Parliament is negotiating the next Framework Programme on Research and Innovation, the Horizon 2020. I am the rapporteur of the Specific Programme Implementing Horizon 2020 - The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020). The societal challenges play an important role on Horizon 2020 and the discussion today provides important inputs in the area of health and ageing.

Horizon 2020 provides a window of opportunity in a time of severe economic upheaval. The number of elderly people in the EU is rising, there is a mounting demand for high-quality health

services and the expectations are increasing by patients to avail of the breakthroughs in personalised medicine. In this sense, I believe that investing in strategies to coordinate and structure medical and clinical research in Europe can help us to save major costs in healthcare and advance our innovation and competitiveness.

The third pillar of Horizon 2020, Societal Challenges, covers cooperative research projects addressing seven major societal challenges. The first of these is “Health, demographic changes and well-being” and it is here that the relevant sections devoted to combating ageing are found. Indeed, the sub-section entitled “Active ageing, independent and assisted living”, clearly states that Multidisciplinary advanced and applied research and innovation with behavioural, gerontological, digital and other sciences is needed for cost effective user-friendly solutions for active, independent and assisted daily living (in the home, the workplace, etc.) for the ageing population and people with disabilities. This applies in a variety of settings and for technologies and systems and services enhancing quality of life

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and human functionality including mobility, smart personalised assistive technologies, service and social robotics, and ambient assistive environments. Research and innovation pilots to assess implementation and wide uptake of solutions will be supported.

In the third pillar, health is recognised as one of the most important societal challenges with, consequently, the single largest budget in this pillar - € billion.

However, Horizon 2020 should be more than a simple funding programme. It should lead, by its very nature, to improving the planning and delivery of the solutions that we propose. In this respect, in the different reports that have so far been submitted, the European Parliament has sought to actively encourage the implementation of scientific lead coordination in the health sector.

By way of conclusion, let me say a few words about the impact of H2020 on Health and Ageing. In the first place, budgetary concerns inevitably remain of prime importance, particularly in the context of the present economic difficulties that Europe is experiencing. It is to be hoped that the fact that health and ageing concerns have been granted the largest share of the budget devoted to societal challenges will translate into continued, sustainable funding for promoting excellence in R&D.

In the second place, it is with satisfaction that I note that H2020 has been considerably strengthened by comparison with previous initiatives. In particular, it can be observed that the programme covers the whole cycle of innovation; and that a central place has been given to scientific lead approaches. And finally, that a real effort has been made to simplify access to funding.

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In this respect, simplification is particularly pertinent in a context in which it is necessary to bring together funding from a number of different budgets to deal with challenges that are often costly.

Against this background it only remains for me to express my sincere hope that the crucial work carried out in the health and ageing sectors will continue in the future with even more resources, vigour and purpose.

Thank you very much.