

Speech from Maria da Graça Carvalho

20 June 2013 Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts, Brussels

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn

Mr Kostas Nittis,

Mr Enrico Brugnoli,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to begin by thanking the organisers for their kind invitation to speak before you today and I should also like to congratulate the organisers for having taken the initiative to launch this event devoted to Navigating the Future and Ocean research.

The event is particularly important as it foregrounds the fundamental role that marine research already plays and will play in the future. Representing some 500 billion euros per year and close to 5.5 million jobs, the blue economy is central to Europe's prosperity and well-being. Blue growth requires both market driven research orientated towards early economic benefits and more fundamental research into the natural ocean system and the ways in which this resource can be made use of in a sustainable manner.

In my address, I should like to begin by making a few general comments with regard to H2020 before going on to concentrate more specifically on the new activity built into H2020 and named Cross Cutting Marine and Maritime Research.

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So to begin with my general comments concerning H2020, this event is particularly timely as we are in the last stretch leading up to the completion of negotiations. As you may know, I am currently the rapporteur for the Specific Programme Implementing Horizon 2020. The not inconsiderable goal of Horizon 2020 is to, at once,

!improve industrial competitiveness,
to encourage excellence in science
and to find ways of resolving the societal challenges that we are currently confronted with.

These include unresolved health problems, energy security and climate change and an ageing population to name but these.

If we are to achieve the ambitious goals that we have set ourselves, then we in Europe must make a frank assessment of our weaknesses without losing sight of our strengths in the domain of knowledge, science and research.

To begin with the strengths: the European Union has allowed for transnational cooperation across the Member States in a way that was not imaginable even a generation ago. Europe now has the largest internal market in the world and remains a world leader in a number of key sectors such as the automotive and

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aeronautics industries not to mention, of course, the marine and maritime domain. Europe possesses world leading researchers, entrepreneurs and companies and a dynamic and wide ranging scientific community. This translates into the single largest amount of scientific publications in the world. In addition, we have a set of deeply embedded values and traditions, a rich and diverse culture and a reputation for creativity alongside a commitment to human rights, to the protection of the environment and ethical behaviour on the world stage.

On the downside, however, Europe still suffers from a number of weaknesses. In particular; Europe is characterised by under-investment in its knowledge base, by unsatisfactory framework conditions enabling the passage from research to the market and finally, too much fragmentation and excessive red tape. Partially for these reasons, the European share in research and innovation is currently decreasing, something that is paralleled by the increasing importance of the science and research being undertaken in the emerging economies.

One of the ways of remedying these difficulties is to further scale up the environment in which research is conducted to a European level. Consolidating a common research area involves enabling as much cooperation as possible -- at a European, national and regional level. This will enable us to enhance

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structural capacities; extend research networks and allow individuals and ideas to circulate more freely.

In furthering these goals, more than a simple funding programme, Horizon 2020 will be a fundamental instrument in structuring research and innovation in Europe over the years to come. In particular, it should be as simple as possible; effectively and adequately funded. It should include a comprehensive approach to the passage from research to market and be designed in such a way as to overcome fragmentation and to encourage trans-European and, indeed, international collaboration.

Marine and Maritime in Horizon 2020

In the light of these strengths and weaknesses, H2020 has been designed around three pillars in such a way as to consolidate the strengths and palliate the weaknesses. At this point, let me give you a piece of good news.

In the H2020 programme, we in the Parliament have managed to introduce a separate, visible and new activity named Cross Cutting Marine and Maritime Research. This came about as a result of one of my amendments and involved, I can tell you, something of a struggle in the negotiation process. However, I am pleased to report that this is now one of the items that have been agreed on and finalised between the three institutions.

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This separate activity will maximise the synergies between research areas when conducting research in the marine and maritime environments. In the past, marine and maritime research was too fragmented as it was separated into different sectoral approaches such as biology, transport, climate change, energy and so on. From now on, a new integrated approach will enable us to combine marine resources, different sources of marine energy - and all the other diverse uses that we can make of our seas and inland waters - into one concerted, overall approach.

The goal is to unlock the potential of inland waters, seas and oceans across the range of marine and maritime industries, while protecting the environment and adapting to climate change. A strategic coordinated approach for marine and maritime research across all the pillars and challenges of Horizon 2020 will also support the implementation of relevant Union policies to help deliver key blue growth objectives.

By way of conclusion, let me just say that I am looking forward to what I am sure will be a successful and fruitful exchange of views. I am sure that the discussion will actively contribute to the Commission's preparation of annual working programmes following on from H2020.

Thank you very much

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