

## **Simplification: The way ahead**

30 November 2010 - European Parliament, Brussels

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Hosted by Maria da Graça Carvalho

### Opening Speech

Ladies and gentlemen,

Mr. Benoît Cerexhe, Minister for the Brussels-Capital Region Government, in charge of Employment, the Economy, Agricultural Policy, Foreign Trade and Scientific Research,

Dear Fellow speakers,

Could I begin by extending my warm thanks to the Belgian Presidency for generously accepting to co-host this meeting.

We should also recognize, I feel, the enormous efforts the Belgian Presidency has made to further the course of simplification in the domain of science and innovation.

I should also like to thank all the other speakers who have agreed to speak this afternoon. These include:

- Clara de la Torre, Director "Interinstitutional Relations and Legal Matters - Framework Programme", DG RTD, European Commission,
- Bruno Delvaux, Rector of UCL Université Catholique de Louvain,
- Gilbert Declerck, IMEC executive officer in charge of relations with Europe,
- Sylvain Allano, Executive Scientific Director PSA Peugeot Citroën and Council member of EUCAR,

There will also be a number of short statements from MEPs with a particular interest in research.

These MEPs, present here this afternoon, are:

Jean-Pierre Audy,  
Jorgo Chatzimarkakis,  
Pilar del Castillo,  
Victoria Grace Ford,  
Marisa Matias,  
Teresa Riera Madurell,

I should also thank them for their presence here.

This is a moment of crucial importance for research and innovation.

The European Parliament and the European Commission have started preparing the Eight Framework Programme for Research to take effect on 1 January, 2014. At the moment, the European Parliament and the European Commission are working on the mid-term evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research.

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As we work, a great deal of criticism has been levelled at European Research funding, mainly on account of its bureaucratic complexity and the financial requirements that researchers confront as soon as they seek funding. I witnessed some of the difficulties these researchers complain of during my own work both as a researcher and as a University Professor at the Technical University of Lisbon.

Today, as an MEP, I am honoured to have been entrusted with the challenge of guiding the report concerning the need for simplification through Parliament.

On 11 November 2010, the Simplification Report was voted on during the plenary session of the European Parliament and was adopted with an overwhelming majority (553 votes in favour to 12 against with 7 abstentions). However, the report marks only the beginning of a difficult road ahead. Now, we have to make sure that our recommendations are properly implemented.

As things stand, a fair degree of progress has been made, in particular, DG Research and Innovation has created a unit - internal to the DG - that is directly responsible for the harmonisation of Commission rules and regulations. The bulk of my report recommendations will have been implemented as a result of the mid term revision of FP7. What will still remain are those parts of the report that require major legislative changes. These will be incorporated into the FP8, which begins in 2014.

DG Research and Innovation will undoubtedly encounter a number of difficulties and barriers as it seeks to implement our recommendations.

Both the Parliament and the Council are fully committed to the success of this process and this meeting is living proof of this commitment. To achieve our joint goals as efficiently and quickly as possible, I have suggested setting up an informal group of MEPs, whose function will be to monitor and encourage the simplification process.

As I see it, the purpose of today's meeting is to compare our respective points of view - those of the Commission, of Academia and of Industry. I also hope that we will be able to come up with a clear idea of the timetable for implementation and the various concrete steps that must be taken along the way.

Well, that is enough from me, no doubt. Perhaps I could hand you over to....