

Let me begin by expressing my gratitude for this invitation from the European Commission, and to take this opportunity to congratulate the Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn and DG Research and Innovation for the successful public consultation on the Common Strategic Framework. As Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn explained, the Common Strategic Framework has three key blocks.

The first, which concerns *us on this panel*, involves excellence in the science base. This is the ground on which everything else relies. Europe's competitiveness and well being depends on this as does our ability to attract leading researchers to Europe.

Before listening to our first speaker, could I just take this opportunity to say a few words about what I feel are three key aspects to the CSF. These are:

\*firstly, the structure of the future CSF;

\*secondly, the budget

\*and lastly, the need for simplification.

So, with regard to the structure of the CSF, one of my suggestions in the past - one that I am gratified to see has been taken up by the Commission - involved establishing three pillars:

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1. A science driven pillar that includes ERC, research support activities such as Marie Curie and European research infrastructures;
2. A policy driven pillar that includes cooperative research projects addressing the major societal challenges, and joint programming.
3. An industry driven pillar that includes JTIs, SMEs, EIB;

These three pillars already represent a much simpler and more effective structure than in the FP7 and I should like to congratulate the Commission on the progress they have made in this direction.

Turning now to the second key aspect, which is the budget. I and a group of MEPs from the EPP group

called for the doubling of the FP8 budget by comparison with the FP7 budget. This was included in the FP7 mid-term review report and was voted on and adopted in Plenary last Wednesday. This proposal has been included in the EU Parliament draft report for the CSF. It has also been included in the future budget report although we have had to adopt the wording "a substantial increase" (rather than "doubling") in this report. The report was also voted on in Plenary last Wednesday.

Lastly with regard to simplification, it will not matter how sophisticated and elegant the CSF is, if we do not manage to build simplification into the new programme. This involves not only fewer instruments but also a radical overhaul of the administrative and financial rules.

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As the MEP that has been responsible for the drawing up of the "simplification report" we have come up with no less than 71 separate recommendations. One third of these require changes to the financial regulations. To this end, I have introduced a series of amendments into the financial regulation report in order to ensure that the 71 recommendations will be implemented at the outset of the new framework programme.

Let me hand you over to our first speaker, Mr. Andreu Mas-Colell, Minister of Economy and knowledge.