Good evening,

Vice-President Rehn,

Mr Jan-Smit

Ladies and Gentlemen

Could I begin by saying what a great honour it is for me to have been invited to address the concluding session of this conference.

The main purpose of my talk is to give some pointers concerning how we might best reinforce the European Research Area.

I have divided my talk into three parts. The first is a brief outline of the main principles that I believe we should have constantly before us. The second is two possible recommendations concerning the relations between the H2020 and the ERA, on the one hand,

and possible synergies between regional, national and European levels, on the other hand.

I shall finish by describing a concrete example - among many others - of where the European level can really add value: that of biomedical research.

1) In so far as the main principles are involved, there are three foundational requirements that I believe we should follow in building the ERA.

These are that

* the steps we take should be constructed in specific, measurable and concrete terms. The creation of the ERA is not a matter of European fiat: it will happen if different sectors pool their resources and feel that there is a real advantage to doing so. Europe can act as a catalyst and, even more than this, European and national programmes and policies should be conceived in such a way that researchers are naturally drawn

to share information,
to cooperate more fully
and move more freely within Europe.

* Secondly, we should make a real effort to further simplification and flexibility. One of the main difficulties that

we experience at the moment is the amount of time that it takes to get anything done in the ERA domain. Sometimes, it can take up to five years to set up cooperation: this was the case, for example, with the platform for research into malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis. Obviously, the existing programmes, such as joint programming, Article 189, PPPs are far too complex and time consuming. We should make a real effort to simplify and speed up the process.

* Thirdly, it is also of prime importance that we bear in mind the actual financing processes and instruments. It is true we need to improve the existing instruments but there is no point in creating a whole new set of new instruments. This is above all the case if these turn out to involve additional complexities of their own.

2) With regard to my recommendations, there are two measures, in particular, that I believe will contribute to building a strengthened and more efficient ERA. These are:

a) Firstly, as we work on completing H2020, following on from what I said before, it is essential that we design the

relevant instruments in such a way that they will actively contribute to building the ERA. In future, we need to make sure that the instruments can be set up much more quickly, that they are simpler, more user-friendly and hence, efficient.

b) Secondly, it is equally important that we create synergies between the regional, national and European levels. I have three remarks in this respect.

* Firstly, one step forward would be to synchronise the different administrative and financial rules at regional, national and EU levels. Evidently, this would achieve much greater complementarity between the programmes.

* Secondly, in so far as evaluation is concerned, it is possible to have separate funding at regional, national, and European level. However, there is nothing to stop us envisaging joint evaluation of proposals at the European level. *Evaluation* at this EU level would create critical mass and, by its very nature, further excellence. Competition between researchers for funding at this level will actually be beneficial. Excellence in research is best stimulated through EU-wide competition.

* Thirdly, at the moment, only 13% of applicants receive EU funding (through Marie Curie or through the ERC). What we need is for the different member states to contribute funds to the financing of the ERC or Marie Curie for those projects

that their countries have come up with
and that meet the criteria of excellence
but that cannot be funded due to the lack of available European funds.

3) Let me turn now to a concrete case - a case among a multitude of other cases - of where Europe can make a difference. Biomedical research is one of the fields that evidently can benefit from greater coordination at European level. Such biomedical research requires multi-disciplinary approaches, involving multinational and large scale research.

An example of this is research into rare diseases. This entails research at as wide a scale as possible (given that any one country will only have a limited amount of cases to base itself on).

Against this background, it is necessary that we find ways of bringing Horizon 2020 and the national programmes into line

with one another. H2020 should be more than a simple funding instrument: it should have a beneficial structural effect on the organisation of research at a European level.

The creation of a single, dedicated platform for biomedical research will serve as a springboard

to greater integration of research in the field,
more sharing of data and information

and finally, enhanced collaboration between researchers across Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, as I see it, the principles that we should have constantly before us are that the measures we take should be specific, measurable and concrete, they should be as simple and as flexible as possible and, finally, they should be adapted to the actual processes and instruments at work in research.

It is important that we design H2020 in such a way that it really does foster a dynamic ERA and, in this respect, we need to think about how best to synchronise at European, national and

regional level. This involves questions of rules, scientific evaluation and funding alongside the promotion of excellence.

All of this represents, I believe, a real step in the right direction, a step towards a more integrated and efficient ERA.

Thank you very much.