

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

Let me begin by saying what a great honour it is to have been invited to speak before you today as a member of the European Parliament. Sitting on the ITRE committee, I have been directly involved in dealing with research and innovation issues. In particular, I was the rapporteur for the Simplification Report, a matter close to my heart as a former researcher and scientist myself. I am also, I should add, the EPP permanent rapporteur on the Budget Committee for Research and Innovation.

In speaking to you today, I should like to offer an assessment of how I see Horizon 2020 and highlight a number of key points that I believe

deserve particular attention. My talk will be in three parts. In the first, I shall offer a brief, general assessment of Horizon 2020. In the second, I should like to stress the importance

of excellence and the stairway to excellence,
of simplification
the importance of building synergy between
Horizon 2020 and the structural funds.

In my third point, to finish with, I shall briefly underline the key importance of providing the most adequate funding possible given the circumstances that we are confronted with today.

1. Overall Assessment of Horizon 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen

With regard to Horizon 2020, considered overall, the proposal represents a real step forward. Indeed, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Commission for having produced such a well-balanced and well-thought out proposal. It represents an excellent base on which we can now build. I should also like to thank the Commission for having absorbed the multiple recommendations emanating from the European Parliament but also from a whole range of other stakeholders and interested parties.

The structure of the new programme is certainly much improved by comparison with FP7. It is simpler and strikes a highly satisfactory balance between the three pillars of

* excellence in science

- * industrial leadership and
- * societal challenges

However, there remain a number of details that still need to be filled in and some aspects that could, undoubtedly, be improved.

2. Specific Recommendations

As for the specific elements of Horizon 2020 that I should like to single out for special attention, there are three main areas that I believe merit careful consideration. These are

excellence,
the synergy between Horizon 2020 and the structural funds and finally simplification.

Excellence

With regard to the place given to excellence within the Commission proposal, I welcome the focus on excellence without any geographical or other preconditions. It is also of fundamental importance that we encourage the first sprouts of excellence. In this respect, the concept of "stairway to excellence" will enable us to create the conditions for the participation of small units of embryonic excellence, such as small research groups and highly innovative start ups. The Commission is to be applauded for its inclusion of such things as "the twinning schemes" and "ERA chairs scheme" as these represent concrete measures that certainly move in the right direction.

Synergy

The second area that I believe deserves particular attention is that of the building of complementarity between Horizon 2020 and various European, national and regional financial instruments. Structural funds, of course, are of central importance in this respect.

Increasing complexity in the field of scientific research requires critical mass and has gone hand in hand with a rising need for expensive equipment. Providing for this is a sphere in which the European Union can make a real difference.

To further these ends, we require a multi-fund approach and strengthening of the bridges that link

Horizon 2020 and other funds - with the structural funds to the fore.

Horizon 2020 has been designed in such a way that we can look forward to real advances. However, the structural funds have a complementary role to play with regard to what Horizon 2020 will be able to do. *Upstream* from Horizon 2020, the structural funds can be used for capacity building. *Downstream* from Horizon 2020, the structural funds can help smooth the passage from conception to market. At the same time, they can also be used to co-finance certain projects.

Simplification

The last element that I should like to focus on is that of simplification. As some of you will already know, this is something of a crusade with me. Horizon 2020 includes the greatest part of the many recommendations that were made in my simplification report.

These include amongst other recommendations:

- A single set of rules for all elements of Horizon 2020.
- Horizon 2020 will accept the different accounting practices that the participants have already adopted in their respective countries.

- Simplification of the time recording system.

Finally, the new rules should facilitate the recruitment of staff to universities in order to work on Horizon 2020 projects. Hopefully, this will keep young researchers in gainful employment.

Funding

Ladies and Gentlemen

The last issue that I should like to touch on will take the least time to say but is not, for that reason, the least important. Horizon 2020, as it stands, already represents an increase in the budget available for research and innovation: €80bn; in fact, as compared with the €52bn under the

previous programme. Gratifying as this is, the EU Parliament has been pressing for an effective doubling of the budget. This is something that would effectively bring the new figure to around €100bn.

A number of European countries support a figure at the higher end of this spectrum. It is to be hoped that other governments will follow this lead especially those countries with a reputation for academic excellence.

My own feeling is that if this money is properly spent on a simplified and ambitious research and innovation programme and as long as it is not squandered, the figure of €100bn will only go some of the way to promoting the progress that

we still need to achieve if we are to compete in a modern globalised world.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let me just say a few words about how I see the future collaboration between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission. If we are to achieve the goals of excellence, of increased synergy between Horizon 2020 and the structural funds, of simplification and of adequate funding, it is of utmost importance that we pull together in the same direction.

Parliament will be voting in Plenary on Horizon 2020 in November of this year. This demonstrates our willingness to make headway as quickly as possible but it leaves us with a tight

schedule. I believe that it is in the mutual interests of Parliament and the different member states

to work in as close partnership as possible,
to freely share our concerns
and to build consensus from as early a point in the process as possible.

In this spirit, I look forward to our fruitful cooperation.

Thank you very much