

Good morning

Ladies and gentlemen

Introduction

It is a great honour for me to have been invited to give this opening address at today's meeting.

Before going on to the main content of my speech, *let me say a few words about myself*. As an MEP, currently responsible for the Specific Programme Implementing H2020, I have been directly involved in the EIT from the outset. Indeed, I was part of the team that planned the initial idea and began its implementation when I worked at the Commission as a part of the group of advisers reporting to President Barroso. Since becoming an MEP -- where I now sit on the ITRE Committee and the Budget Committee -- I have had the honour of being asked to be the co-chair of the

Parliament's group of Friends of EIT, a group that was created in March 2011. In this capacity, I can assure you that there is real and active support for the EIT in the Parliament.

As for the main theme of today's meeting, discussion of the present and future state of the EIT is particularly timely given that we are currently finalising six reports for H2020 of which two reports have direct relevance to EIT.

In this respect, the rapporteurs from the Parliament are negotiating the final details of Horizon 2020 with the Council and Commission. All the three institutions are committed to finishing the negotiations during the Irish Presidency --which is to say before June 2013 -- in order to allow for the proper implementation of Horizon 2020 at the beginning of 2014.

Against this background, I hope that today's discussion will allow the different stakeholders to gain a better impression of the progress that has so far been

made and to contribute their own input as we approach the final furlong. My colleague Lambert Van Nistelrooij is shadow rapporteur and I am sure that he will give you more details about the current state of play with regard to the EIT negotiations.

As for my own contribution, I should like to concentrate on how the Parliament can make a difference to the EIT. As such, I shall begin by making some general remarks -- in which the importance of adequate funding is of central importance -- before going on to suggest that Horizon 2020, in general, and the EIT, in particular, are -- and should be conceived of as being -- more simple funding instruments.

Importance of Funding

After three years of fruitful growth, the EIT is at a critical juncture. Like a flower, the EIT will either blossom or wither and fade away depending on whether

or not the conditions are right for its growth. What, then, can we do to make sure the EIT blossoms?

As I understand it, this can be done by:

- Making the best possible choices in terms of future KICs;
- Actively fostering stability in rules and procedures whilst ensuring that the on-going simplification process is maintained.
- And, finally, by supporting the appropriate budget for the EIT as proposed by the Commission;

Indeed, I hope that the results of the negotiation concerning the overall European budget for the period 2014-2020 will end satisfactorily. This will mean an adequate budget for Horizon 2020 so that we can give to the EIT the ambition that the EIT deserves and Europe requires.

Four Key Elements

However, Horizon 2020 and EIT are much more than funding programmes: both will be fundamental instruments in structuring research and innovation in Europe over the years to come. Generally speaking, both should be as simple as possible; effectively and adequately funded, 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 collaboration across Europe and beyond.

More particularly, for my purposes today, of the many different aspects to Horizon 2020 -- as this includes the EIT -- four aspects in particular stand out. These are firstly, simplification, secondly, a comprehensive approach to the cycle of innovation, thirdly, widening of participation and, finally, the question of synergies with other funds.

These 4 principles are common to Horizon 2020 and EIT. However, EIT is a unique programme as it

combines education with research and innovation. It is designed in such a way as to have a direct impact on Employment and growth, through a culture of entrepreneurship, creation of new talents and the creation of start-ups.

Simplification

To begin with simplification, simplification is something of a crusade with me. As a result, it is with a sense of a mission accomplished that I note that the new programme includes the greatest part of the many recommendations that I have been able to make when I acted as rapporteur for the Simplification Report.

Indeed, Horizon 2020 should be as simple and as well structured as possible. There is no necessary conflict, in this respect, between the simplification of the operating rules and the rigour with which programmes are managed. Quite the opposite is often the case:

effectiveness and efficiency are adversely affected by excessive complexity in the allocation of funds.

A Comprehensive Approach to the Cycle of Innovation

Secondly, *with regard to the cycle of innovation*, one of the main problems that Europe faces is not so much lack of scientific quality: it is more the weakness of the mechanisms that allow for transfer of knowledge and innovation to the real economy. The ability to innovate but also to see innovation through to viable market solutions is of central importance.

Unfortunately, in recent years, industry involvement in European science and innovation programmes has tended to fall off. Horizon 2020 aims to counteract this tendency, notably by encouraging the active engagement of small and medium-sized European companies.

In this respect, Horizon 2020 aims to smooth what is the often long and expensive path from fundamental

research to commercial exploitation. The whole innovation cycle should be covered as this will lead to greater participation on the part of European industry.

Widening of Participation

Thirdly, Horizon 2020 places considerable emphasis on *widening participation*. The “widening of participation” conceived of in such a way as to encourage the involvement of strong units of embryonic excellence such as small research groups and highly innovative start-ups.

This can be achieved by fostering greater transparency, through simplification of rules and through the development of instruments that will enable SMEs and smaller organisations to play a much more active role in the European research and innovation environment. An example, in this respect, is the

Twinning Schemes, a principle that also applies to the EIT.

At the same time, the *heightening* of excellence should remain central to Horizon 2020, something that supposes that excellence is defined independently of any geographical or other precondition.

Synergies with Other Funds

Finally, let me say a few words about synergies with other funds. Achieving, at once, scientific excellence, and industrial competitiveness whilst meeting our societal challenges is beyond the resources of a single programme. At the same time, Europe's ambition to cover the whole cycle of innovation will inevitably require a multi-fund approach. For this reason, Horizon 2020 -- including the EIT -- should be articulated with and complemented by other, parallel sources of European funding.

In particular, European "structural funds" could be deployed both upstream and downstream from Horizon 2020 to enhance capacity building and to facilitate the passage from concept to market. On the one hand, these funds should enable European research bodies, universities and companies to develop the capacity required in terms of equipment and manpower to succeed. On the other hand, the same funds should be made use of to promote the results of research undertaken under Horizon 2020, allowing for an outflow to the economy and for deployment in society at large.

The notion that the EIT -- through the KICS -- should engage with the regions of Europe whilst making use of a variety of EU funds is in line with the general principle of encouraging synergies with the structural funds.

It only remains for me to wish you a fruitful and successful conference: your discussion will be of considerable use in helping us to define the final details

of Horizon 2020, including EIT. At this point, let me
hand you over to Mr Alexander von Gabain, Chairman of
the EIT Governing Board.

Thank you very much