

Máire GEOGHEGAN-QUINN

European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science

**"Research and Innovation: Addressing
common challenges in Europe"**

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Launch of Science Europe

Berlin, 21 October 2011

Minister Schavan, Professor Kleiner, Professor Imboden, Professor Boyle,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you today to mark the birth of Science Europe, the new association that will assemble the European research and science funding and performing organisations. This is my first visit to Berlin as European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, and I am especially pleased that it coincides with such a remarkable event.

I know from my own experience over the last 18 months, and from what my officials tell me on the basis of their longer experience, that EUROHORCs and the European Commission have always had an excellent relationship.

I have no doubt this will continue under your new banner and that excellence will be the keynote of the future relationship between Science Europe and the Commission. And excellence is certainly something that we must continue to nurture in Europe's research and science base. I count on Science Europe to help us do that.

The establishment of Science Europe comes at a very busy and interesting time for European research.

Our proposals for Horizon 2020 – the new funding programme for research and innovation - will appear before the end of the year. It will be structured around three distinct, but mutually reinforcing blocks, in line with Europe 2020 priorities and in support of Innovation Union.

The first block, 'Excellence in the science base', will strengthen the EU's excellence in science, through actions supporting frontier research (through the very successful European Research Council); Future and Emerging Technologies; Marie Curie actions and priority research infrastructures.

Excellent research is the foundation on which Innovation Union, and our push for growth and jobs, are based.

The second block, 'Creating industrial leadership and competitive frameworks,' will support business research and innovation. Actions will cover: increasing investment in enabling and industrial technologies; facilitating access to finance, and providing EU-wide support for innovation in SMEs.

The third block, 'Tackling societal challenges', will respond directly to challenges identified in Europe 2020. Its focus will be on the challenges of: health, demographic change and well-being; food security and the bio-based economy; secure, clean and efficient energy; smart, green and integrated transport; resource efficiency and climate action, including raw materials; and inclusive, innovative and secure societies.

We will ensure that our proposals for Horizon 2020 strike the right balance between fundamental and applied research, and between a top-down approach where goals are fixed in advance and a bottom-up approach where research themes are not pre-determined.

I am committed to major simplification in Horizon 2020: through a simpler set of rules, grant instruments and funding models; simpler application procedures and shorter time to grant; and through fewer audits and controls.

Excellence will always be the main criterion for funding under Horizon 2020. I am determined to ensure that Horizon 2020 will not only strengthen the excellence we already have in Europe but also identify and nurture it in all our regions, so that excellence and innovation can grow all over Europe.

To help achieve this, we are improving the synergies between Horizon 2020 and the Structural Funds. Horizon 2020 will identify potential centres of excellence, clearly recognise them – give them a seal of approval, if you will – and offer them policy advice and support. The upgrading of infrastructure and equipment, on the other hand, will come under the remit of the Structural Funds.

The European Commission will now continue to develop its proposals, which will be presented before the end of this year.

But in order to ensure that we achieve the high expectations we have for Horizon 2020, we need to finally establish the European Research Area – the ERA – by 2014. This was the deadline set by the EU Heads of State and Government. It is an ambitious target, but it must be met.

Now more than ever, we need the best brains working together on the breakthroughs needed to tackle our societal challenges. ERA will allow us to achieve the critical mass needed to do this, and it will allow us to get better value for money by reducing unnecessary duplication in the research and infrastructure financed under national systems.

As well as increasing co-operation and co-ordination, ERA will increase the competition that promotes excellence. There is a strong analogy here with the single market. By exposing our businesses to more competition within the home market, the single market made them more competitive externally. ERA will do the same for research organisations, universities and faculties.

This is very much in line with the views expressed by EUROHORCs in its "Vision for the realisation of the European Research Area", which stated that "Science progresses through a creative tension between competition and cooperation".

ERA, indeed science and research generally, can benefit from this creative tension between cooperation and competition. I want to strengthen both. Competition will increase excellence; cooperation will help us solve our greatest societal challenges.

To establish the European Research Area, the support of all stakeholders in the European research and innovation system will be fundamental. In this respect, the creation of Science Europe represents a big step in the right direction. Science Europe consolidates the voices of researchers at European level, facilitating cooperation with the whole scientific community and funding bodies.

I look forward to our continued dialogue and to a continuation of the national 'round tables', that bring together national policy makers and ministries, the European Commission and research organisations. We expect many other things from Science Europe and its member organisations. What, concretely, can you do?

Coordination among research funding and performing organisation, national governments and the European Commission will need to be stepped-up to a previously unachieved level. You will have a key role in doing this. National research programmes should be oriented, much more than in the past, towards addressing the real, common challenges that Europe is facing and that demand urgent solutions.

Your commitment to bring forward the actions listed in the 'Vision and Road Map for a Globally Competitive ERA', that was elaborated by EUROHORCs and the European Science Foundation two years ago, should be finally translated into a credible work plan to be completed, in any case, by the end of 2014, consistent with the deadline set for completing ERA.

In my view, you should pay particular attention to making your funding, evaluation and monitoring systems fully homogeneous. You should support cross-border cooperation by ensuring that procedures are simple and mutually coherent. You should try to ensure that grants are portable and open your programmes to pan-European participation. You should do everything you can to ensure that national research systems can become fully inter-operable.

By taking decisive action, Science Europe will become a powerful and authoritative voice in European research policy. But your best efforts are not enough by themselves to remove all the obstacles to the creation of ERA. Many issues require action at the political level.

That is why we launched in September a public consultation on what needs to be done at European political level to allow you to fully achieve your goals: a single European labour market for researchers, the ambitious goal of creating a European Grant Union; maximising the benefits of open access to publicly funded research; developing and maintaining an efficient network of European Research Infrastructures; and, boosting innovation by establishing effective and trusted bridges between science, society and the private sector. All this is part of what we call the ERA Framework.

Taking into account the essential role of national research funding and research performing organisations in the development of ERA, I expect your inputs in the consultation process to be among the most valuable. We want you to tell us where you think regulatory intervention, incentives or other measures to boost the efficiency of the European research system could be justified.

At the end of the consultation process, we should be in a position to translate our commitment to "complete ERA" into concrete and verifiable objectives and detailed actions. This will materialise as a Commission proposal, but you will be key to its implementation, so that we will finally achieve a fully functional European Research Area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The founding of a new organisation is an exciting venture. We have the best of both worlds today - Science Europe will give a fresh impetus to the representation and active involvement of researchers at European level, and at the same time you will be building on a solid foundation of many years of experience.

You have excellent prospects before you. European research has excellent prospects, all the more because you are there as knowledgeable and experienced advocates for excellent research.

So, if I wanted to sum this up in a motto, it would be "Science Europe – Supporting Excellence".

Thank you.