

Good Morning

Ladies and gentlemen,

Colleagues and dear friends,

Could I begin by saying what a great honour it is for me to have been invited by CLUSTER to address its annual General Assembly.

I regret not being able to participate in person. Yet, it is a great honour to speak before you today if only by video.

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 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 has been divided into three parts.

a) In the first, I shall offer a brief, general assessment of Horizon 2020.

b) In the second, I should like to stress the importance and some key features

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

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

<b>1) Overall Assessment of Horizon 2020</b>
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With regard to Horizon 2020, considered overall, the proposal represents a real step forward. The Commission has produced a well-balanced and well-thought out proposal which represents an excellent base on which we can now build. In the Ministerial research meeting organized last week by the Danish Presidency, I had the chance 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) <i>Specific Recommendations</i>
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*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 particular units of embryonic excellence, such as small research groups and highly innovative start ups. In this respect, 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 represent real movement in the right direction.

### *Synergy*

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

Increasing complexity in the field of scientific research requires critical mass and this has gone hand in hand with a rising need for expensive equipment. Ensuring that this is made possible is a role that the European Union is particularly well-suited to playing and

a sphere in which it 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.

As I have already mentioned, Horizon 2020 has been designed in such a way that we can look forward to real advances. However, the structural funds have a *further*, 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 recommendations include amongst others the following three key points:

- 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 in a climate that is currently marked by some difficulties.

3) Funding

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 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, at least, 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 the way forward. The European Parliament is preparing now the reports containing our response to the Commission proposals. These reports will be ready by the end of April. Until then, the MEPs more directly involved in this work, in which I am included, will perform an extensive consultation of the interested stakeholders.

In this respect, I take this opportunity to invite you to the European Parliament in Brussels or in Strasbourg where CLUSTER will have the opportunity to discuss with me and other

MEPs involved in research, your suggestions for improvement of the Horizon 2020.

I am looking forward meeting you in the European Parliament.

Thank you and good work