Máire GEGHEGAN-QUINN
European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science

"Horizon 2020 – A Paradigm Shift for Funding Research and Innovation in Europe"

Launch of Horizon 2020 in Germany
Berlin, 28 January 2014

Minister Wanka, State Secretary Schütte, Mr Reul,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be back in Berlin for the launch of Horizon 2020 in Germany.

In fact, this is my thirteenth visit to Germany in my role as the European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science.

From Hanover to Düsseldorf, from Stuttgart to Dresden, and of course in Berlin, I have seen how Germany's genius for science and innovation has sustained your economy through Europe's most trying economic crisis.

I have been very inspired by the scientists and engineers, the innovators and manufacturers that I have met in companies like Bayer and Bosch and in organisations like the German Aerospace Centre.

The strength of Germany's economy, particularly in manufacturing, is proof positive to the rest of the world that it pays to reform and it pays to keep on investing in the biggest drivers of growth: education, research and innovation.

We have learned this lesson too at the European level and the result is Horizon 2020.

The programme was launched last month with much fanfare and with the first calls for proposals. This was the culmination of several years' work involving people and organisations from all across Europe. I’d like to thank the German government for its invaluable support during the negotiations for Horizon 2020.

And I would like to congratulate Dr Wanka on her reappointment to the new German government and am also glad that Mr. Schütte continues to be part of her team. I am happy to continue our excellent cooperation, which already has led to so many positive results.

You will hear more details about Horizon 2020 in the other panel sessions later today. I would just like to take this opportunity to highlight what I think are the most exciting opportunities offered by Horizon 2020 and what I expect the programme to deliver to you.

Horizon 2020 is a totally new type of research programme for the EU - indeed, it is no exaggeration to call it a "paradigm shift" in how we fund research and innovation.

If I could encapsulate it in one sentence, I would say that Horizon 2020 is designed to deliver the results that will make a difference to people's lives.
Worth more than 80 billion euro over seven years, Horizon 2020 is one of the few areas of the EU's new budget to see a major increase in resources. I am determined that this additional money – around 30% more than FP7's budget – will be invested as wisely and efficiently as possible.

It will fund not just the best fundamental research, but also applied research and innovation, bringing in small and large companies. This is vital because we know that research and innovation are the foundation of growth and jobs.

I think that this "paradigm shift" is most clearly demonstrated in two aspects: simplification and coherence in Horizon 2020.

First, simplification: from the start of my mandate, I have been very keen to make it easier for our scientists and business people to access EU funding. While the previous generation of programmes had lots of different rules, Horizon 2020 applies the same rules everywhere, making it much easier to apply for financing and participate in projects.

Projects will be up and running on average four months earlier than under the previous system and there will be less paperwork and fewer audits.

I have no doubt that simplification will encourage smaller-scale organisations, particularly SMEs, to get involved.

We have also designed Horizon 2020 to be much more coherent. By bringing together all EU-level funding for research and innovation under one roof, we can support you in a seamless and joined-up fashion, at every step of the journey from excellent fundamental research all the way to innovative products and services.

Of course, this support will take different forms.

It could be a European Research Council grant that enables a top scientist to stay in Europe to pursue her risky but promising research.

It could be support to industry to maintain Europe's lead in a key enabling technology such as biotechnology.

Or it could be funding for a wide-scale collaborative research project tackling a societal challenge such as climate change – which brings me to one of the most exciting changes seen in Horizon 2020.

The programme is also designed to address society's biggest challenges. Issues such as food and energy security, clean transport, public health or climate change, cannot be solved by a single field of science or technology, let alone a single Member State acting alone.

It's here that 'European added value' can make all the difference. By making it easier for the best researchers to work together, regardless of borders, we can get bigger, world-changing impacts and better results for taxpayers' money.

These complex challenges will need solutions that draw upon many different areas of research and innovation. That's why interdisciplinarity is such a crucial aspect of Horizon 2020.

We will encourage researchers to get out of their silos, and we expect broader societal aspects to be addressed by embedding the Socio-Economic Science and Humanities across the whole programme.
Horizon 2020 will also be less prescriptive about what projects need to do. This will allow researchers and innovators to come up with the bright ideas to address the challenges. However, we will be more demanding about the impacts of research and innovation, and this will be one of the key criteria for selecting which proposals get funding.

We are counting on Europe’s best minds to work together to both solve our societal challenges and make our economy more innovative and more competitive.

So Horizon 2020 champions Europe’s excellent scientists, with increased funding for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions on researcher training, mobility and careers, and more money for the prestigious European Research Council.

I want to take a moment to pay tribute to the European Research Council, the ERC. For me, it is a shining example of how Europeans can become world-beaters if we set our sights high and work together. I know that Germany is a great supporter of the ERC – Chancellor Merkel herself opened the inaugural conference here in Berlin in 2007, and we owe much to the first general secretary of the ERC, Professor Winnacker.

Under Horizon 2020, the ERC will continue to finance world-class scientists of any nationality to conduct top-tier research in Europe. I’m delighted that the new President of the ERC, Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, will take part in one of the panels this afternoon.

Horizon 2020 will also be very good for business.

I was determined from the outset to get more companies participating and I hope that many more companies from Germany will take the bait!

Simplification will certainly help sell Horizon 2020 to businesses, as will the guiding ethos of support from “lab to market” which will offer private companies greater scope to get involved in close-to-market actions.

More money will be available for testing, prototyping, demonstration and pilot type activities, for business-driven R&D, for promoting entrepreneurship and risk-taking, and for shaping demand for innovative products and services.

In short, Horizon 2020 helps the business sector to reap the full commercial rewards from in-house innovation.

We’re also investing heavily in our most promising industries.

Public/private partnerships on innovative medicines; fuel cells and hydrogen; aeronautics; bio-based industries; and electronics – along with public/public partnerships in the areas of ageing population, poverty-related diseases, metrology research and SME support - are expected to mobilise up to 22 billion Euro of investments, with 8 billion coming from the EU.

And we’re not just focusing on the biggest companies. Horizon 2020 has been specifically designed to meet the needs of small and medium-sized companies too.

Research and innovation for SMEs are promoted across Horizon 2020 as a whole, but we are also introducing a new instrument that is adapted to their specific needs, inspired by the United States’ ‘SBIR’ initiative.

I am confident that the new SME instrument and the new financing options, in the form of risk-sharing and risk finance, will be very attractive to innovative SMEs in Germany.

One of our goals for Horizon 2020 is wider participation by actors of all sizes and from all the Member States, so we want to help all countries and regions to attain the level of excellence necessary for success in the Programme.
I have been working closely with my colleague, Commissioner Hahn, to ensure that Horizon 2020 works hand in hand with the European Structural and Investment Funds. A smart specialisation strategy is a crucial tool in creating synergies between these two programmes.

Smart specialisation is the process whereby regions pinpoint their competitive advantages, set strategic priorities and implement smarter policies to maximise their potential.

A smart specialisation strategy will be a precondition to receiving research and innovation funding from the Structural and Investment Funds.

Germany has played a leading role in developing the smart specialisation policy. This is a country with substantial differences between the regions and given your experience in addressing this issue, I am confident that the smart specialisation strategies currently being finalised in Germany will be very effective in addressing the needs of the different Länder.

Since Horizon 2020 aims to fund the very best research and innovation, it will of course continue to allocate funding on a competitive basis - promoting excellence demands as much.

Most research and innovation indicators show that some countries, mainly in central, eastern and southern Europe, are not yet fully exploiting their full research and innovation potential.

The new twinning and teaming actions as well as the ERA Chairs initiative aim to strengthen the scientific excellence and innovation capacities of emerging institutions.

Of course, Germany is not a low-performing Member State in terms of European funding – quite the opposite! However, I expect German organisations to play an important and active role, in particular as advanced partners and knowledge providers in the teaming and twinning actions. I am delighted that several German institutes, including Max Planck and Fraunhofer – have shown interest in participating as advanced partners in this part of Horizon 2020.

I have only had time to mention just a few of the many opportunities that Horizon 2020 offers to researchers and innovators in Germany.

So where should you begin?

Building on your experience in FP7 is a good start.

Germany certainly seized every opportunity under the Seventh Framework Programme, which ended in 2013. Your success rate was above the EU average, with more than 3,150 participants drawing down nearly six and a half billion Euro of funding.

Participants were most successful in the areas of Information and Communication Technologies; the ERC and Marie Curie Actions; Health; Nanosciences, Materials and production technologies, and Transport, including aeronautics.

I encourage you to capitalise on this experience and build on your potential in these areas, while seeking to maximise opportunities in other areas with the greatest potential. You have a high and growing level of excellence in science and technology and clear strengths in areas such as new production technologies, energy, environment and transport, especially the car sector.

I think that success in Horizon 2020 will rely on a number of factors, most of which are in the hands of national authorities, universities and business.
I give a similar message wherever I go in Europe: we need to do better in research and innovation, reform and improve research and innovation systems and transform our industries and economies to create the growth and jobs that we so desperately need.

We need reform in the Member States because it is here that the vast bulk of research and innovation money is still invested.

I know that you share this view because Germany has shown the rest of Europe how long term structural reform of the research and innovation system pays continued economic dividends.

Your economic success didn’t come about by accident. It is founded on sound economic structures and competitive businesses with high levels of innovation.

However there is no room for complacency. An export-oriented, high-wage economy like Germany’s is in constant need of innovation to remain competitive in ever-changing world markets.

In the years ahead, the combination of national and European measures will continue to support Germany’s efforts to improve research, innovation and entrepreneurship at the national and regional level. Germany’s High Tech Strategy 2020, the EU structural funds and, of course, Horizon 2020 are some of the tools at your disposal.

Germany will also benefit from a strengthened European Research Area, through the free circulation of researchers and knowledge and the strengthening of the research base across the whole all of Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Horizon 2020 will be an excellent fit for German researchers and entrepreneurs.

You performed excellently under FP7, and I am very confident that you will do just as well under the new programme.

So I am issuing both a call and a challenge today – find out how you can participate, find partners if necessary, and sign up!

Seize the huge opportunities offered by Horizon 2020!

Thank you