



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Máire GEOGHEGAN-QUINN

European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science

Launch of Horizon 2020 in Greece

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Athens, 10 January 2014

Minister Arvanitopoulos, Commissioner Damanaki, Dr Vasilakos,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be in Athens today for the official launch of Horizon 2020 in Greece.

And I am very happy to share the platform with my dear colleague, Maria Damanaki. I am grateful for Maria's continued support for research and innovation in Europe.

In a way, I feel like I am returning a favour – Maria and I were together in my home city of Galway last May for the signature of the Galway Statement on Atlantic Ocean Cooperation.

You will hear more from Commissioner Damanaki shortly on the opportunities for marine and maritime research and innovation, especially as regards Blue Growth.

Today is a day of beginnings, of new starts.

We are at the beginning of the Greek Presidency of the Council, which comes at a very important moment for Europe with the European Parliament elections this coming May.

And we are right at the beginning of Horizon 2020, the new, seven year programme that offers many opportunities for researchers and innovators in Greece and across Europe.

In the sessions later today you will hear more detailed information about the content and workings of Horizon 2020.

I would just like to take this opportunity to highlight the most exciting opportunities offered by this new programme and what I expect the programme to deliver to you.

Greece is in an excellent position to benefit from Horizon 2020.

With nearly 80 billion euro to invest over the next seven years, Horizon 2020 is one of the few areas of the EU's new budget that sees a major increase in resources.

I am determined that this additional money – which represents a roughly 30 per cent increase in real terms on the 7th Framework Programme for Research – will be spent 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 so vital because we know that research and innovation mean growth and jobs.

For me, the two most important themes running through Horizon 2020 are simplification and coherence.

Simplification first: from the start of my mandate, it has been my top priority to make it easier for our scientists and business people to access EU funding so they spend less time on administration and more on research and innovation.

Simplification applies across the whole programme.

While the previous generation of programmes had lots of different rules, Horizon 2020 applies the same rules everywhere – making it much easier to apply and participate in projects.

Projects will be up and running in eight months – that means four months earlier than under the 7th Framework Programme – and while the project is running there will be less paperwork and fewer audits.

As well as reforming how we administer the programme we have redesigned the programme architecture from top to bottom to be much more coherent.

By bringing together all the EU-level funding for research and innovation under one roof, we can support you in a seamless and joined-up fashion.

Horizon 2020 will be there at every step of the way from excellent fundamental research all the way to innovative products and services – from lab to factory to market.

You will probably have heard already that one of the biggest changes is Horizon 2020's challenge-based approach.

This is because the challenges facing Europe - whether food and energy security, clean transport, public health or security – cannot be solved by a single field of science or technology or, indeed, a single Member State.

These complex challenges 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're encouraging researchers to get out of their silos, and we expect that broader societal aspects are addressed by embedding the Socio-Economic Science and Humanities across the whole programme.

Horizon 2020 is also 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 and boost the economy.

However, we are more demanding about the impacts of projects, and this will be one of the key criteria for selecting which proposals get funding.

We are counting on Europe's scientists to produce excellent research that will both lead to solutions to societal challenges and underpin our drive for innovation and competitiveness.

Even when budgets are tight, we can't afford not to invest in basic research, because we can never be sure where it may lead us or what the applications could be.

So Horizon 2020 champions the very best science, with increased funding for the prestigious European Research Council and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions on researcher training, mobility and careers.

And Horizon 2020 is also very good for business. I was determined from the outset to get more companies participating in European research and innovation projects. I hope that many more Greek companies will take the bait!

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.

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 around 22 billion euro of investments, with 8 billion coming from the EU.

But we're not just focusing on the biggest companies. Horizon 2020 has been designed to be good for small and medium-sized companies.

Indeed 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.

The new SME instrument and the new financing options in the form of risk-sharing (through guarantees) or risk finance (through loans and equity) to support innovative companies could be especially interesting for Greece, so I hope that they will explore all of the new possibilities under Horizon 2020.

I have been working closely with Johannes Hahn, the Commissioner for Regional Policy, to make sure that the new Structural and Investment Funds will work hand in hand with Horizon 2020 to build excellence.

Under the new Cohesion policy, each Member State and region should develop smart specialisation strategies that build on their respective strengths. This means that they will be betting on their most likely winners.

In fact, such a strategy will be a precondition to research and innovation funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds.

If we want Europe to lead in the fast-growing and high-tech markets of tomorrow, research and innovation must be among the priorities of the Smart Specialisation Strategies and the Partnership Agreements that open up access to the huge funding opportunities in the Structural Funds.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are just some of the many opportunities that Horizon 2020 offers to Greece's researchers and innovators. Where should you start?

Building on your experience in FP7 is a good way to begin.

As regards the 7th Research Programme that closed last month, the latest figures show that Greek participants have drawn down more than 913 million Euro, with over 3,300 participations.

The most successful areas for Greek participation are Information and Communication Technologies, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, Transport and Nanosciences and Nanotechnologies.

I am confident that you will do even better under Horizon 2020 by further improving your participation in these areas and by targeting other sectors with the greatest research and innovation potential.

These include the agri-food sector, medical services and pharmaceuticals, the environment and clean-tech industry. Other examples are materials and nanotechnology, where academic research has found applications especially in the small but growing microelectronic industry in Greece.

Horizon 2020 has already got off to a flying start.

In December, we published the first calls for proposals. Over the next two years we will channel more than 15 billion Euro in funding to the best ideas that Europe has to offer.

All the information can be readily found at our new participants' portal.

I would just like to highlight one of the calls in particular.

The Blue Growth call for 2014-2015 will invest 145 million Euro in research and innovation on issues such as Atlantic Ocean observation systems, blue biotechnologies, the impacts of climate change on fisheries and aquaculture, and the need for an integrated response to oil spills and marine pollution. Please make sure to check this and the other calls launched last month.

Success in Horizon 2020 will rely on a number of factors, and many are in the hands of national authorities, universities and business. I give a similar message wherever I go in Europe: we need more research and innovation!

We need to reform and improve national systems and we need to transform our industries and economies to create the growth and jobs that Europe so desperately needs.

This is what our European Research Area and Innovation Union policies are all about.

We need to reform national systems because it is here that the vast bulk of research and innovation money is still invested.

And that expenditure must work efficiently, to get the best possible results for the money.

Successful reform could pay off both in terms of winning more funding at the EU level, and in bringing more private research investment into the country.

We are all very aware of the huge pressure on public finances in Greece, but I hope that both the public and the private sectors will continue to invest in research and innovation as a way of ensuring long term competitiveness and growth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Horizon 2020 can be your partner in the quest for competitiveness and growth.

Apart from the increased funding available – vital though this is – Horizon 2020 is a catalyst for exchanging ideas and innovation.

It will give you access to new and fast-growing markets, often in high-tech sectors, and it will create strong and durable networks.

For me, this is a significant part of the added-value of European funding - it enables you to perform research and innovation in Europe which would otherwise be impossible because of the very high costs and lack of critical mass.

Greece is primed to take advantage of this. You have a body of well-connected and experienced research groups from FP6 and FP7 who can certainly do even more under Horizon 2020.

These are just some of the very good reasons why I am confident that many more researchers, universities, businesses and innovators from Greece will participate in Horizon 2020.

Participating in Horizon 2020 will help Greece reach its full research and innovation potential.

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

Thank you.