



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Máire GEOGHEGAN-QUINN

European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science

Launch of Horizon 2020 in Spain

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

Launch of Horizon 2020/Madrid

11 November 2013

Your Royal Highness,
Minister De Guindos,
Ladies and gentlemen,

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

Later on, you will hear detailed information on what Horizon 2020 entails, including from experts from different services of the European Commission.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight what I think are the most exciting opportunities offered by the new programme, what I expect the programme to deliver to you, but also what we expect from the proposers.

With a budget of more than 70 billion euro over 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 25 per cent increase in real terms on FP7 – 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 so vital because we know that research and innovation mean growth and jobs.

Spain is in an excellent position to benefit from Horizon 2020. Your researchers and innovators are already active participants in FP7 - more than 8,300 of whom are participating in FP7 projects, receiving a total funding of 2.5 billion Euro.

This puts Spain in 5th place in the list of FP7's most successful Member States. This great track record is also demonstrated by the fact that between FP6 and FP7, the number of projects coordinated by a Spanish participant increased by 60%.

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

Simplification first: from the start of my mandate, it has been a top priority to make it easier for our scientists and business people to access EU funding. They kept telling me, and justifiably so, that unnecessary red tape meant they spent too much time on administration – time that could be better spent on research and innovation.

Simplification applies across the whole programme.

While the current generation of programmes have lots of different rules, Horizon 2020 applies the same rules everywhere. That means it is now much easier to participate.

The reimbursement of project costs will be much simpler with a single reimbursement rate for most projects. That means less paperwork and fewer audits.

And under Horizon 2020, projects will be up and running in eight months, about four months earlier than under the current system.

So, we have reformed how Horizon 2020 will be administered. We have also reformed the overall design of the programme so that its approach is much more coherent, which brings me to my second point.

Horizon 2020 is designed from top-down and bottom-up to be 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, at every step of the journey from excellent fundamental research all the way to innovative products, services and processes that we hope will conquer world markets.

You will have already heard 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, let alone a single sector, or a single organisation.

That is where 'European added value' makes the crucial difference: making a bigger impact and getting better results from taxpayers' money by helping the best researchers work together irrespective of borders.

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 that broader societal aspects are addressed by embedding the Socio-Economic Science and Humanities across the whole programme.

We 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 that projects must have, 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 underpin both our search for solutions to societal challenges and our quest for innovation.

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

But 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 Spanish companies 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.

This is an area where Spain has well-known strengths, as shown for example by its successful participation in international initiatives such as Eureka.

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.

The programme will promote even greater industry involvement and leverage of investment, including dedicated support for ICT, nanotechnology, materials and production technology, more public-private partnerships, and reinforced support for demand-driven innovation like innovation procurement.

Five Public/Private Partnerships - dealing with innovative medicines; fuel cells and hydrogen; aeronautics; bio-based industries; and electronics - are expected to mobilise up to around 22 billion euro of investments, with 8 billion coming from the EU. These Partnerships offer huge opportunities for companies and researchers right across Europe, including SMEs.

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 Spanish companies.

One of our goals for Horizon 2020 is a wider participation and that all countries and regions can build the level of excellence that will be needed to be successful in the Programme.

I have been working closely with Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Regional Policy, to make sure that 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. It 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.

This will also ensure that the Structural Funds work in harmony with Horizon 2020 to step up Europe's research and innovation performance in a world dominated by fierce global competition.

Greater success in Horizon 2020 relies on a number of factors, and many are in the hands of national authorities, universities and business.

I give this message wherever I go in Europe: we need to maintain investments in research and innovation today to ensure growth and jobs.

It is not surprising that our Heads of State and Government, when they met two weeks ago, all agreed that 'Investment in research and innovation fuels productivity and growth and is key for job creation. Member States that have continued to invest in research and innovation have fared better in the current crisis than those that have not'.

This goes for public as well as private investment. Indeed, publicly-funded R&I policy should aim to leverage private investment.

We need to reform national systems because it is here that the vast bulk of research and innovation money is still invested, and that investment must be efficient, to get the best possible results for the money.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts that Spain is making to reform its research system, despite the current crisis. The new Strategy for Research and Innovation is well aligned with Horizon 2020. It focuses on finding research and innovation solutions to the societal challenges identified in Europe 2020, and its axes are directly linked to the pillars of Horizon 2020.

This alignment will make it much easier to create synergies between the national and European level programmes. I would like to offer my congratulations for all your work in this respect.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am convinced that Horizon 2020 will be a good fit for Spain. I say this for several reasons.

First, Horizon 2020 will fund research and innovation in areas where Spain was successful under FP7 such as ICT and Nanotechnologies, Materials and New Production Technologies.

But Spain has also acquired and developed a vast expertise in cutting-edge science and technology linked to the societal challenges in fields such as health and energy, as well as in the social sciences and in fundamental research, to cite just a few examples.

These are all areas where your country has a strong potential and where the participation of your researchers and innovators will certainly make the difference. This is why initiatives such as the ambitious programme that the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness has launched to encourage Spanish participation in Horizon 2020 will no doubt prove very effective.

Second, beyond funding - vital though this is - Horizon 2020 is a catalyst for crucial exchanges of cutting-edge knowledge.

It enables access to new and fast-growing markets, often in high-tech sectors, and it creates strong and durable networks.

Many of you have told me over the years that you are very strong supporters of the Framework Programmes precisely because of that added value, because the Framework Programme enables you to perform research and generate innovations in Europe which would otherwise be impossible because of the very high costs and lack of critical mass.

And you also supported the Framework Programmes because collaborating at European level gave you access to extraordinary pools of talent and excellence and the knowledge needed to ensure that European products and services seize the lead in global markets.

And Third, Horizon 2020 now puts a strong emphasis on innovation and knowledge transfer. This will help Spain to increase the linkages and cooperation between research, innovation and industry - a challenge faced by several Member States - and one to which the Commission has drawn attention in its Country-Specific Recommendations for Spain.

In this context durable public-private partnerships aimed at solving specific problems linked to the societal challenges will be essential.

By capitalising on the potential for success offered by Horizon 2020, you will be helping to transform Spain from a "modest innovator" to one of the innovation leaders in Europe and help improve Spain's performance in the European Commission's new Indicator of Innovation.

These are just some of the very good reasons why I want many more researchers, universities, businesses and innovators from Spain to participate in Horizon 2020.

You will have your own reasons - whether you are a scientist with a ground-breaking research idea; an SME that is ready to test your innovative new product in a brand new market; or a university aiming for excellence.

You, and many others, will all find a place in Horizon 2020.

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.