



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science

Launch event for Horizon 2020 in Austria

Launch of Horizon 2020 / Vienna

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be back in Vienna for the launch of Horizon 2020 in Austria.

I know that Horizon 2020 is eagerly anticipated here and I would like to thank you for the enthusiasm that you have shown for Horizon 2020 from the very beginning of our work, even before the Commission made its proposal more than two years ago.

Indeed, Austria was the first Member State to submit an official position paper in response to the Commission's proposal. And in April 2012 the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research organised a major stakeholder conference, here in Vienna, at which I was very pleased to present our proposals.

I am very confident that researchers and innovators in Austria will take full advantage of the huge opportunities offered by Horizon 2020.

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

Horizon 2020 is a totally new type of research programme for the EU, and it is designed to deliver results that 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 for the next seven years that sees 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 mean growth and jobs.

The key words for me are simplification and coherence.

First, simplification: from the start of my mandate, it has been my priority to make it easier for our scientists and business people to access EU funding.

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 apply and participate in projects.

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 on average four months earlier than under the current system.

I have no doubt that the many simplifications being introduced will encourage smaller-scale organisations, particularly SMEs, to get involved.

So, we have reformed how European funding will be administered. But 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.

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 area like biotechnology.

It could be investment in a project to demonstrate the feasibility and market potential of a technological innovation.

Or it could be funding for a wide-scale collaborative research project tackling a societal challenge such as climate change – which brings me to another of Horizon 2020's most exciting developments.

Horizon 2020 is also designed to address society's biggest challenges in a coherent fashion. The challenges facing Europe – whether 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 sector, or a single organisation.

It's here that 'European added value' can make all the difference: by getting bigger impacts and better results for 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 the 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.

Under Horizon 2020, the ERC will continue to give world-class scientists of any nationality the chance to conduct top-tier research in Europe.

I would just like to pay tribute to Prof. Helga Nowotny, a native of this city, who has been such a successful President of the ERC. Much of its current success can be attributed to her excellent leadership.

Horizon 2020 will also be 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 companies from Austria 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.

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.

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.

So, Horizon 2020 is stressing the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors and between universities and business. This is certainly an area where you can lead because collaboration between academia and industry is very strong in Austria. In fact, you are the experts in knowledge transfer, ranking third among OECD countries.

But we're not just focusing on the biggest companies. Horizon 2020 has been designed to be good for 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 (through guarantees) or risk finance (through loans and equity), will be very attractive to innovative SMEs in Austria who want to turn great ideas into must-buy products and services.

One of our goals for Horizon 2020 is wider participation by actors of all sizes and from all the Member States of the European Union, 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.

I would like to pay tribute to the important contribution of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research in developing and implementing the new smart specialisation policy.

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.

But there are also a number of new measures to ensure that the programme is open to a wide range of participants, from all the Member States and from all the regions.

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.

Austria is not a low-performing Member State in terms of European funding, so it is not a target for these new measures. However, there are clear opportunities for Austrian organisations to take the role of advanced partners in these actions, so I encourage you to investigate the possibilities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have only had time to mention some of the many opportunities that Horizon 2020 offers to researchers and innovators in Austria. But where should you begin?

Building on your experience in FP7 is a good start.

Austrians certainly seized every opportunity under the Seventh Framework Programme, which ended in 2013. Your success rate was above the EU average, with 3,150 participations drawing down more than 1 billion Euro of funding.

Participants were most successful in the areas of Information and Communication Technologies; 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 potential such as the environment and energy.

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, and that expenditure must work efficiently, to make the most out of the money invested.

I know that you share this view.

The Austrian research and innovation system has a high and growing level of excellence in science and technology and clear strengths in key technologies for energy, environment and transport.

The strategy "Becoming an innovation leader", published in 2011, contains many initiatives to improve the performance of the research and innovation system.

You are also investing in the future.

I am very impressed by Austria's national R&D intensity target of 3.76%, one percentage point above the performance in 2011 and the third highest national target among the Member States.

Public spending on research has been on a firm upward course since 2002 and increased during and after the recession of 2009, however, growth in private spending has slowed in recent years.

So I was encouraged to learn that, following an initiative of the Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology, 22 of the biggest Austrian companies have committed to increase R&D spending by 20% by 2015.

In the long run, creating an efficient, outward looking and dynamic research and innovation system will ensure that your economy has a solid, long-lasting foundation.

We want this for every country in Europe, and Horizon 2020 can provide the spark.

Horizon 2020 will be an excellent fit for Austria's researchers and entrepreneurs.

You performed very well under FP7, and I am very confident that you will do even better under Horizon 2020.

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

Don't be afraid to think big, because Horizon 2020 is about big opportunities and big results.

Make the most of it!

Thank you.