



The informal meeting of the ministers responsible for Competitiveness - Research

3 April 2019, Bucharest

Presidency informal discussion paper

Session I: Reinforcing and spreading excellence, including by fostering wider participation throughout the Union

The research and innovation divide remains a real challenge in Europe and more efforts need to be undertaken at the national, regional and European level. Taking into account that this reality is creating difficulties both to Member States and to the entire Union, preventing them to benefit from the full research and innovation potential, adequate tools and mechanisms need to be developed in order to ensure an inclusive and, at the same time, forward-looking approach with regard to research and innovation in the EU.

To be able to face global scientific and socio-economic challenges, we have to mobilize our researchers and engineers as well as scientific and technological excellence, wherever established in the European Research Area.

An important objective of the Romanian Presidency is to promote European initiatives aimed at reducing research and innovation performance gaps between EU member states, through fair measures and adequate tools, in order to strengthen the European Research Area. This objective can be achieved by widening participation and sharing scientific excellence in order to build a critical mass of researchers and ensure an adequate level of research, development and innovation activities in all EU member states. The success of Horizon Europe is essential not only for the involvement of a high level scientific community, but also for the development of state-of-the-art research infrastructures using accessible, effective and flexible funding programmes and rules, enabling synergies intended to enhance technology transfer and shorten the time to market.

While embracing the principle of excellence, it is important to identify those measures and tools, which could help reduce the research and innovation disparities at European level and foster the synergies with the structural funds and other funding resources.

Taking into account the good progress reached on the 19th of March in the inter-institutional negotiations, which led to a provisional common understanding with regard to the future Horizon Europe Programme, the Romanian Presidency is committed to continue facilitating a fair, accessible, transparent and efficient post-2020 framework for research and innovation in the entire European

Research Area by opening up the closed networks and simplifying the access of (new) participants in to the Horizon Europe Programme.

Building on the PGA adopted on 30 November 2018, the achievements of the Competitiveness Council held on 19 February 2019 and the very recent progress of the negotiations, the Presidency would like to continue the constructive dialogue launched over the last months and invite ministers to participate in an exchange of views and discuss how EU can better address this key challenge, by focusing their interventions on the following question:

- **To what extent would you consider that the proposed measures can effectively address this Union's challenge?**

Session II: Development of a European strategic framework for cooperation in research and innovation in the Black Sea Region

Seas and oceans are among the ecosystems with important socio-economic growth potential. In order for Europe to tap into this vast potential, further steps are needed to protect natural waters against the harmful impact of unsustainable human activities, such as pollution, overfishing and introduction of alien species. There is also a need to encourage science-based policy making, to foster new, innovative technologies promoting the sustainable growth of the marine and maritime sectors and to stimulate/encourage regional, sea-basin cooperation with enhanced EU support. Specific actions should be agreed and jointly implemented by European countries as well as non-EU neighbouring states in this regard. Furthermore, there is a strong need to streamline the synergies between the existing strategies – at local, regional and European level and beyond Europe and develop new ones for the seas still uncovered (like the Black Sea). The European Union could play an important role in identifying the most appropriate tools to achieve these objectives. Seas and oceans surrounding Europe are not only external borders but also areas with vast and unused economic potential which could be sustainably managed, with significant benefits for both the welfare of the citizens and the stability and security of Europe.

Back in 1992, all six countries from the Black Sea basin signed “The Bucharest Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution” which /enabled the launching of the Black Sea Strategic Action Plan (1996, renewed in 2009) and established the *Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution*. Moreover, the UN, through its instruments, “Black Sea Environmental Programme” and “Black Sea Ecosystem Recovery Programme”, and the European Union starting with the Framework Programme 4, have invested a lot of efforts and resources in increasing the quality of the environmental status of the Black Sea.



Building on the achievements of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, on 21 May 2019 the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union will organise in Bucharest a ministerial conference where a Common Maritime Agenda is foreseen to be endorsed by the Black Sea riparian countries and the Republic of Moldova, as a result of a one year preparation process facilitated by the European Commission. The Agenda will integrate the relevant components from the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the Black Sea – a document which is planned to be launched on the occasion of the conference "Sustainable Development at Black Sea" to be held in Bucharest on 8-9 May 2019.

The Black Sea, with two Member States on its western shores, is an EU sea. But in contrast to others, a research strategy is lacking and badly needed.

It is only through Science and Innovation that Blue Growth can be supported in the Black Sea. This is why we need to support the dedicated scientific community with the necessary resources and political will in order to open the way towards a sustainable economic growth in the Black Sea.

Based on the above, we would like to invite you to express your opinions on the following questions:

- **How could the Strategic Framework on the Black Sea be further strengthened and used for the development of research and innovation projects that would lead to the sustainable exploitation of seas and oceans?**
- **How can a joint ownership of all actors involved be ensured?**

Structure of the debate

The discussion will start with introductions/ key notes by Mr. Nicolae Hurduc, Minister of Research and Innovation, and Mr. Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation. Ministers are invited to contribute in an interactive questions and answers session, based on the aforementioned questions and issues. Each session will be closed with concluding remarks by Nicolae Hurduc and Carlos Moedas.