



Director-General Robert-Jan SMITS

**Future R & I policy including climate research
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SPEECH

Ladies and gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to have been invited to the launching event of the European Climate Research Alliance. This partnership, established by the most excellent European research institutions, will allow for the creation of synergies by exploiting the strengths of each of its members, and creating a critical mass of competences and expertise. As such, the alliance contributes significantly to the European Commission's objective of establishing a European Research Area as a framework for improving the efficiency and the impact of European research.

EUROPE 2020 & SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

As we all know, one of the many challenges of the 21st century is climate change. The EU is a world leader on legislation, policies and actions associated with this topic. The EU Climate and Energy Package, the recent communication establishing '*A roadmap for moving to a low carbon economy in 2050*' and the '*White Paper on Climate Change Adaptation*' provide the pillars for carrying out mitigation and adaptation efforts.

At international level, the EU is a catalyst in the post-2012 negotiations and decisions on climate change, especially under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

It is therefore fully understandable that the Europe 2020 Strategy recognises the importance of the climate change challenge and spells out that we need sustainable, smart and inclusive growth for our citizens.

RESEARCH & INNOVATION

To achieve our goals in the field of climate change and energy, we need to invest in research & innovation.

The reason for this is that research and innovation will allow us to:

- improve the understanding of climate change and the provision of reliable climate projections
- assess the impacts of climate change on society, economy and ecosystems
- support the development and assessment of effective adaptation and mitigation policies.

It is therefore no surprise that under Framework Programme 7, the multi annual research programme of the EU, top priority is given to climate research, through the EU research projects. Through these projects the scattered research efforts in Europe's Member States can be pulled together. As such we can reduce fragmentation and develop structured cooperation between Europe's best scientists and research organisations. And where we are organised in Europe, we are a much more interesting party for cooperation at the international level. Thanks to the efforts of the EU, we have seen the emergence of impressive research infrastructures for climate research. Let me mention as example SIOS, the Svalbard Integrated Arctic Earth Observing System, coordinated by Norway and in which 14 countries participate.

The goal of SIOS is to establish an observational Research Infrastructure for the Arctic Earth System, integrating studies of geophysical chemical and biological processes from the research and monitoring platforms. Besides this, there is the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, which through its recently established Climate Knowledge and Innovation Community, already promotes research, innovation and entrepreneurship on climate change.

Before the summer President Barroso has presented the Commissions Proposal for the MFF, the EU budget for the period after 2013. Striking in the proposal is the sharp increase for the funds for research and innovation, to be grouped together under Horizon 2020.

Horizon 2020 will be characterised by:

- a simplified and user-friendly set of rules and procedures
- the coupling of research & innovation
- a challenge-driven approach
- strengthening of the science base.

Horizon 2020 will be structured around three distinct, but mutually reinforcing blocks, in line with Europe 2020 priorities.

The first block 'Excellence in the science base' will focus on boosting scientific excellence, by strengthening the European Research Council and stepping up support for priority research infrastructures. It will also continue to promote training and mobility of researchers in Europe.

The second block 'Industrial leadership and competitive frameworks' will support business research and innovation, with particular focus on SMEs.

The third block 'Tackling societal challenges' will support activities across the entire spectrum from research to market, and will focus on a number of key challenges such as health, energy, transport, food security, climate change and resource efficiency, as well as inclusive and secure societies. The European Institute of Innovation and Technology will, through its knowledge and Innovation Communities, also address these challenges.

Climate change research will obtain a central place in Horizon 2020. The European Climate Research Alliance will certainly play a significant role in the coming future.

However, it is worth noting that there are other excellent institutions in the field of climate change all over Europe including in the new Member States. And I urge the Alliance to keep an open approach! We must not forget that diversity is one of Europe's greatest assets.

In closing, I would like to welcome the European Climate Research Alliance, and I look forward to its contribution on tackling the enormous challenges which lie ahead of us.

Thank you for your attention.