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“On the role of universities in Horizon 2020”

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Introduction

- Minister Toechterle, Ladies and Gentleman,
- It is a pleasure for me to speak here today on the role of universities in Horizon 2020. You could not have planned your event better regarding this topic. This week a Communication of the Commission was published emphasizing the important role of universities and higher education institutions for a smart, green and inclusive Europe. It confirms once again universities are at the heart of Europe's actual growth strategy.
- But, before introducing the Communication, let me give you the wider political context of our policy plans.

Europe 2020 Strategy

- Last year, Europe's heads of state and government endorsed this Europe 2020 strategy, Europe's strategy to get out of the crisis. The strategy is centred around smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Doing 'things smarter and greener' is key.
- The Europe 2020 strategy places research and innovation central to Europe's economic recovery. Europe needs to compete with the rest of the world via its knowledge.

- And research and innovation can contribute to tackling the issues of greatest concern to our citizens, including food safety, energy security, climate change and an ageing population. The challenges are as big as the opportunities are great, so we need to combine forces at the European level.

Innovation Union

- To realise this Europe 2020 Strategy we need to turn the European Union into an Innovation Union.
- Universities play a core role for the Innovation Union: they are the only institutions to cater for all sides of the knowledge triangle, education, research and innovation. And needless to say that for technical universities, gathered today here in Vienna, with their 'innovation friendly' profiles and close links to industry, this is even more valid.
- Presented in October last year, the Innovation Union flagship proposes a series of measures or "commitments" that are directly related to universities.
- 1. First of all, quality and excellence. Europe needs a wide diversity of universities and each must pursue excellence in line with its mission and strategic priorities. Excellence must even more become the guiding principle. We need more world-class universities, raise skill levels and attract top talent from abroad.
- At the moment, too few European universities are recognised as world class in the current research-oriented global university rankings. At the same time, more transparent information is needed about the specific profile and performance of all aspects of university performance. This will help students make informed study choices, enable institutions to identify and develop their strengths, and support policy-makers develop effective strategies for education, research and innovation.

- 2. Second, mobility. Students and researchers must be able to work and cooperate across the EU as easily as within national borders. A truly free movement of knowledge must be realised by promoting open recruitment, portability of pension funds, a transparent system of doctoral training, and last but not least an attractive research career with possibilities for inter-sectoral mobility.
- 3. Third, interaction between academia and industry. We need to get more innovation out of our research. Cooperation between the worlds of science and the world of business must be enhanced, obstacles removed and incentives put in place for cooperation between industry and academia, also in view of regional development.
- 4. Fourth, internationalisation. Cooperation with international partners is needed to leverage the quality within the institutions. This means strategically searching for international partners, speaking with one voice towards third country partners and opening access to our R&D programmes.
- 5. And last but not least, fifth, funding. Universities can only be at the top if their long-term financial sustainability is ensured.

Communication on Supporting growth and jobs (higher education systems)

- The Commission published this week a Communication "**Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems**". The Communication underlines the great importance the European Union is attaching to the knowledge economy and takes further up the commitments of the Innovation Union once again.
- The actions listed in the Communication aim to contribute directly to the **implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy** and its Flagship Initiatives: Youth on the Move, an Agenda for new skills

and Jobs, A digital Agenda for Europe, but also and notably the Innovation Union flagship commitments.

- It marks the shift to a new growth model which puts knowledge creation and transmission on the forefront and transforms universities into innovation engines.
- 1. First of all, the Communication, calls on Member States and institutions to take action to enhance the quantity, quality and relevance of higher education. They should strengthen the knowledge triangle, create better governance and funding mechanisms, promote mobility and foster internationalisation.
- 2. Second, to help **cross-border and inter-sectoral mobility**, the Commission is proposing a **European Framework for Research Careers** making career structures comparable and facilitating mobility between academia, industry and other employments areas.
- We are also working towards setting up **pan-European supplementary pension funds** for researchers. It would allow research organizations to **offer a more attractive employment package** to their researchers and would address an important obstacle to mobility.
- Improved access, employment conditions and progression opportunities for students, researchers and teachers from other countries should be used to implement the Directives on students and researchers and the EU Visa Code.
- 3. Third, the communication recommends to strengthen the knowledge-transfer infrastructure of universities and enhance their capacity to engage in start-ups and spin-offs. Our universities should more actively engage in dissemination of research results and knowledge transfer. Next to being able to attract the best young people and researchers our universities must encourage these researchers to work in a multi-disciplinary approach, More bridges between the academic realm and

industry need to be built. I again recall the pioneering role of technical universities in this respect.

- 4. Fourth, the Communication announces the launch of U-Multirank: a new ranking and information tool for the assessment of university performance. Such a tool will enable users to profile institutions based on data on the quality of teaching (e.g. employability outcomes), research performance, the capacity for knowledge transfer and for supporting regional development and the degree of internationalisation. It will be a major challenge but our aim is to produce a global ranking tool which will allow us to compare the performance of European universities with their competitors worldwide. First results are expected in 2013.
- 5. And fifth, it is in principle a national responsibility to ensure investments in higher education and research. We can only build a knowledge economy by investing in it.
- The Commission on its part will take her responsibility at the European level and will propose to substantially increase EU funding for education, research and innovation, through its programmes, notably Education Europe, Horizon 2020 and the Structural Funds.

Horizon 2020

- Let me therefore now say a few words about the upcoming funding plans in the field of research and innovation. Within the MFF proposal, the Commission has proposed a **total budget of 80 billion Euro for Horizon 2020 in constant 2011 prices**. This represents an increase of its budget for research and innovation with 46% as compared to the current financial perspectives. By doing so, greater emphasis will be put on innovation and tackling grand challenges. And you certainly will agree that universities have their role to play regarding these opportunities.
- On 30 November 2011, the Commission will present to Council and Parliament its proposal for Horizon 2020, the new funding instrument of the EU in the field of research and innovation.

Horizon 2020 will come into effect in the **next EU Budget** period which will start in 2014.

- Horizon 2020 will **bring together the main EU instruments**, namely the Framework Programme, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and the European Institute of Technology (EIT).
- The proposal clearly shows the Commission's **strong commitment** to deliver on the ambitions of Europe 2020 and the Innovation Union. **Horizon 2020** will support the **key policy priorities of Europe 2020**. It will bring about radical changes to the way in which we fund research and innovation.
- The goal is to **increase efficiency** by working according to common strategic priorities; to **increase impact** by providing support from research to market uptake and by focusing on major societal challenges, competitiveness and an excellent research base and to make **EU funding more attractive and easy to access** for participants through simplified rules, a streamlined set of funding instruments, common entry points, and common IT platforms.
- 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 strengthen the EU's world-class excellence in science, through actions supporting frontier research (European Research Council), future and emerging technologies (FET), Marie Curie actions and priority research infrastructures.
- The second block '**Tackling societal challenges**' will respond directly to challenges identified in Europe 2020. It will support activities across the entire spectrum from research to market. Its focus will be on the challenges of: health, demographic change and well-being; food security and the bio-based economy; secure, clean and efficient energy; smart, green and integrated transport;

supply of raw materials; resource efficiency and climate action; inclusive, innovative and secure societies.

- The third block '**Creating industrial leadership and competitive frameworks**' will support business research and innovation. Actions will cover: increasing investment in enabling and industrial technologies, facilitating access to risk finance and providing EU wide support for innovation in SMEs with high growth potential.
- In all three blocks, **universities** – and technical universities in particular – have their specific role to play and I consider them in a good starting position to make use of **future EU funding**.
- The Commission is aware that technical universities often are **model cases** for implementing the **full innovation chain**, from basic research to spin-off companies producing marketable products. They tackle societal challenges directly and make the benefits of research available to society.

European Research Area (ERA)

- And there is even more going on!
- With all its new measures and support actions Horizon 2020 will be **the main funding instrument at EU level** for the achievement and functioning of the **European Research Area (ERA)**. It aims to incentivise Member States and stakeholders like universities to play their role within this process.
- The **completion of the European Research Area** was also called for by the February 2011 European Council.
- As promised in the Innovation Union initiative, we aim to make a proposal by the middle of next year for an overarching **ERA framework** and supporting measures to remove obstacles to mobility of researchers and cross-border co-operation.
- To prepare this, we will follow a **rigorous and evidence-based approach**. Our aim is to ensure that all these measures are in

force by the end of 2014 to meet the deadline set by the Member States.

- The ERA Framework will further **support the autonomy and governance of universities** in Europe as an essential tool for increasing research and teaching standards.
- **A public consultation was launched on 13th September 2011** to collect national and stakeholder views. It focuses on an analysis of the obstacles to the achievement of ERA.
- I would like to **invite** you to start reflecting on the main obstacles to achieving ERA, **to contribute yourselves to the consultation** and to promote and facilitate an active contribution by your stakeholder community.
- To be very clear: We know that ERA is not about structures or funding. **ERA is mainly about people**. A successful European Research Area heavily depends on excellent European researchers.
- We need to make the **European Research Area** more **attractive to European and non-European researchers** and we need to **remove the obstacles to their mobility**, provide good working conditions, including social security, within Europe, to Europe and between academia and the private sector.

Concluding remarks

- This is exactly what you aim at with this conference on "Synergies between Education, Research and Innovation".
- Universities and their researchers are central to our innovation societies. They make innovation a reality. Through the Europe 2020 Strategy, the **Innovation Union flagship, Horizon 2020** and **ERA** we support your good work. I see technical universities in the forefront, they should lead by example!
- I look forward to intense and meaningful discussions and wish a successful event.