Good afternoon everyone.

I’m delighted to be here today to launch the Irish EU Presidency Conference on Researcher Careers and Mobility.

Today’s Conference is one of a series of Irish Presidency Conferences on important research themes, and I can’t think of a more fitting venue for the Conference than here in the historic surroundings of Dublin Castle.

**Horizon 2020**

The key research and innovation priorities during the Irish Presidency are to achieve political agreement on the Horizon 2020 Programme - the next European Research Framework programme which is due to commence in 2014- and to make further progress on the achievement of the European Research Area.
We have been working hard with the Member States, the European Commission and the European Parliament to finalise agreement on Horizon 2020 during our Presidency and this work will continue right to the end of June.

It is a complex process to reconcile the various interests of all the parties involved.

However, I welcome the shared commitment among all the parties concerned to advancing these negotiations.

We must demonstrate to the citizens of the European Union that we are representing their interests efficiently and effectively.

It is therefore imperative that we make progress as speedily as possible to ensure that there will be sufficient time to give effect to the necessary legislative procedures to implement Horizon 2020 from the start of 2014.

European support for research, education and training through Structural Funds and participation in the Framework Programmes during the 1990’s, was a critical factor in the growth of Ireland's global research impact.

We have come from a very low base to our present position where we now rank 19th in the world.

In Europe, we must foster research excellence to maintain our leading international position. We must provide pathways to enable researchers to find employment in industry where their talents can lead innovation and develop new products and processes.

Many of you here today are academics and there is certainly strong representation from the research community in the Conference Programme.
I am glad to see there are also a few “enterprise” voices.

And of course, in some cases, you are one and the same thing – people who have moved from campuses to companies and back again.

This is an important aspect of the “mobility” agenda.

The Irish Government has funded new schemes through Science Foundation Ireland and the Irish Research Council to engage researchers with employers in the private and public sectors.

Only last week, SFI launched an Industry Fellowship Scheme - the Industry Fellowships programme - which will facilitate exchanges between academia and industry to stimulate excellence through knowledge transfer and training.

The fellowships will enable access for researchers from academia and industry to new technology pathways and standards, and will facilitate training in the use of specialist research infrastructure.

The Irish Research Council’s Employment-Based Post-Graduate Programme is a direct support mechanism to facilitate wider employment opportunities for graduates, and to ensure that our most talented researchers contribute across all sectors of the economy and society.

I would like to see this Programme, and other similar programmes, fully evaluated in the coming months to ensure that it is targeting the key priority areas of opportunity for Ireland having regard to our strengths and opportunities.

Completing the European Research Area

Europe needs a unified research area to attract talent and investment.
Remaining gaps must therefore be addressed rapidly to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation.

That is why the Irish Presidency has also included the further development of the European Research Area among its priorities.

Our aim is to secure substantial progress towards meeting the target set by the European Council in February 2011 to complete the European Research area by 2014 in order to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation.

So where does Ireland stand in relation to implementing the policies of the European Research Area?

- **Open international recruitment** is the cornerstone of our national funding programmes, and recruitment policies of higher education institutions and companies.

- Ireland is outside the Schengen Area; however we have implemented the **Third Country Directive for Researchers** through my Department and the Irish Universities Association since the Directive took effect in 2007.

- **International Peer Review** is carried out for all of our national research funding agencies and is highly valued by our researchers in ensuring that they are measured according to the highest international standards.

- Ireland launched an **Open Access** policy in October 2012, and we are now working to ensure that the results of all publicly-funded research will be available to researchers globally.

- Ireland has implemented the **European Principles of Innovative Doctoral Training** in Ireland for many years, through funding for structured PhDs through the Higher Education Authority’s Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions, and the
policies of our higher education institutions.

- EURAXESS Ireland, is linked to a European network of over 200 EURAXESS mobility centres in EU Member States.

This facility provides practical support to research-active organisations and researchers in higher education and the private sector both moving to, and from, Ireland.

Later today, I will be pleased to announce a further development of this facility, one which will be of particular interest to the industry sector.

So, in conclusion, let me say I am delighted that Ireland can contribute directly to the achievement of a truly Open Labour Market for Researchers by hosting this Researchers’ Careers and Mobility Conference under our Presidency.

The Conference over the next two days will look to practical solutions to implement the ERA policies, with the 2014 deadline in mind.

All of you here today, through your active participation in the Conference, can contribute to these objectives.

I wish you well in your deliberations and I hope you will have a productive but also enjoyable time here in Dublin.

Thank you.