



Uachtaránacht na hÉireann ar
Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh
Irish Presidency of the Council
of the European Union
eu2013.ie

Presentation by Minister Sean Sherlock TD, Minister for Research and Innovation on Irish Presidency's Space and Research Priorities to ITRE Committee

Check against delivery

23 January, 2013

It is a particular pleasure for me to have the honour to address the European Parliament on the Space and Research priorities of the Irish Presidency. I fully appreciate the role of the Parliament as the directly elected legislature representing the largest trans-national democratic electorate in the world. The expanded role and authority of the Parliament under the Lisbon Treaty reflects this democratic legitimacy. I look forward to working constructively with the Parliament to ensure that the Council and Parliament, as co-legislators, fulfil our responsibilities to the people of the European Union.

I had the opportunity last year, in preparation for the Presidency, to meet with the Chair of the ITRE Committee, Ms Sartori, and Rapporteurs Mr. Ehler and Ms Carvalho. I have also had the chance this morning to meet with a number of the other Rapporteurs. Also, a delegation from the ITRE Committee came to Dublin in October last year. All of these engagements help to establish a mutual understanding of our shared objectives.

Space Priorities

As Minister for Research and Innovation, I will be Chairing the Space and Research formations of the Competitiveness Council. The Irish Presidency's objectives on Space Policy are to:

- Progress discussions on a draft regulation on GMES, assuming that the funding issue regarding whether this project is within the MFF or outside the MFF is resolved. It is expected that if the funding issue is resolved

the Commission will propose a Regulation by late Spring 2013.

- We also propose to progress a proposal for a Decision on Space Surveillance and Tracking - vital to the security of satellite assets, industry and the general population.
- Furthermore we would wish to reach conclusions on a Commission Communication due on Space Industrial Policy – a critical component which will enhance the potential involvement of SMEs in the Space Sector.
- During the Irish Presidency our ambition is to agree Council Conclusions on the relationship between the EU and ESA. This will provide direction to the Commission to pursue a set of actions which will assist in developing coherence and complementarity between both bodies.

I hope to be able to bring these dossiers to the table at formal meetings of the Competitiveness Council in February and May.

Significant progress on these dossiers would represent a major advancement in the Space interests of the European Union and the combined benefits of their socio-economic impacts should not be underestimated.

During the Irish Presidency, I look forward to continuing to promote the evolution and growth of the space sector at a European level and the significant benefits which this will bring to European industry, the research sector and society in general in both the short and in the longer term.

Research and Innovation Priorities

Objectives:

Research and innovation are of major importance given their potential role in contributing to economic recovery, competitiveness and growth across the EU.

The Irish Presidency's objectives in this respect are to:

- Accelerate the realisation of economic and societal value and impact from European knowledge,
- Increase the global competitiveness of Europe's industry,

- Enhance Europe's human capital in research and development,
- Improve the innovation capacity of Europe's SME's, and
- Maximise synergies with national level strategies and investment.

Actions:

To deliver these objectives we will give priority to the following actions through legislative actions, policy debates and conclusions at Council and dedicated Presidency events, as appropriate:

- Achieving agreement on the Horizon 2020 package
- Progressing the completion of the European Research Area
- Promoting the adoption and deployment of key enabling technologies, such as nanotechnology, and their commercialisation
- Promoting further development of the innovation capacity of SMEs
- Strengthening the research and innovation capacity of European regions
- Enhancing engagement between science and society on responsible research and innovation.
-

Horizon 2020

Of course, the key research and innovation priority for the Irish Presidency will be to achieve political agreement on the Horizon 2020 package. A great deal of work has already been done by previous Presidencies in agreeing a Council position on the various elements of the Horizon 2020 proposals. The Irish Presidency will work with the Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission with a view to agreement by the end of our Presidency on the whole of the Horizon 2020 package.

Achievement of agreement on this item will of course be dependent on the conclusion of negotiations on the MFF. Research and innovation have been placed at the centre of the Europe 2020 strategy to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth through the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative. Much remains to be decided on the EU's budget and it is in all our interests to secure appropriate funding for research and innovation. I was particularly pleased to see that the ITRE Committee, when adopting its negotiating mandate on the Horizon 2020 package in November, gave broad

support to Horizon 2020 stating "*This programme is an opportunity for Europe to invest in its future and to help us get out of the crisis ...The Union budget should mirror this ambitious goal.*"

I know that discussion in the trilogue negotiations on Horizon 2020 has commenced at technical level, with the first trilogue meeting per se on 31 January. I welcome our shared commitment to advancing these negotiations. It is vital that we demonstrate to the citizens of the EU that we are representing their interests efficiently and effectively. And it is vital, therefore, 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.

I am pleased to see that the Parliament shares many of the interests on the Framework Regulation proposal that we have had at the Council. The Irish Presidency is looking forward to a fruitful negotiation with the Parliament on this major file. We will do our best, closely working with the European Parliament, to ensure that work on the various components of this package contributes to the three reinforcing priorities of Horizon 2020. Together, we must strengthen and extend the excellence of the Union's science base with world class researchers; maintain and increase the Union's industrial leadership; and address the major societal challenges through novel innovative solutions that foster growth and jobs in Europe.

I would like to stress at this point the importance of the principle of Simplification as a priority. It is important to strike the right balance between simplification and flexibility, in order to successfully implement Horizon 2020.

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. The Irish Presidency, therefore, also includes 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.

We will include a particular focus on a number of the ERA priorities identified in the ERA Communication:

- jointly addressing grand challenges,
- an open labour market for researchers,
- enhancing international cooperation

Competitiveness Council Meetings

We propose to hold meetings of the Competitiveness Council on 18 and 19 February and 29 and 30 May. Issues to be tabled by the Irish Presidency at the Competitiveness Council will include:

Better access to scientific information,

Where we propose to have a policy debate at Council on this important issue.

The Presidency will continue to exchange views with the Parliament with a view to developing further the policy on open access and its implementation in the European Union, and in particular in the context of Horizon 2020.

How best to ensure coordinated public investment in research and innovation across Europe,

The Presidency will host a major Conference on Joint Programming on 28 February to 1 March on the lessons from the experience to date and the way forward in joint programming. Following on from this, we propose to have a policy debate on joint programming at Council in May.

In relation to the strategic nature of High-Performance Computing as a crucial asset for the EU's innovation,

The Presidency will propose the adoption of Council conclusions on the strategic nature of High-Performance Computing as a crucial asset for the EU's innovation.

Enhancing and focusing international cooperation in research and innovation

This is an essential, cross-cutting and integral part of the European Research Area. It plays a vital role in contributing to the quality of European research and the strengthening of the economic, industrial and technological competitiveness of Europe. The Irish Presidency will propose Council conclusions to endorse this this new strategy for developing international cooperation in research and innovation, as proposed in the Commission's ERA Communication, and in the Communication from the Commission on "Enhancing and focusing international cooperation in research and innovation."

Informal Council

In conclusion, we will also have the pleasure of hosting an informal meeting of the Competitiveness Council in Dublin on 2nd and 3rd of May. In line with the overall theme of the Irish Presidency, the Research theme of this informal Council meeting will be *"How to optimise the benefits of European research investment for European jobs, growth and society."* I hope that the ITRE Chair, Ms. Sartori, will be free to join us at this informal Council.

ENDS