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European Commissioner for Science and Research

## **FP7 - Tomorrow's answers start today**

*Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

FP7 launch – Internationales Kongresszentrum Bundeshaus Bonn

**Bonn, 15 January 2007**

Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's great to be here today. Bonn is not very far from Brussels. In fact, it's 234 kilometres. But it has taken 20 months to get here.

My journey started in April 2005 when I presented the European Commission's proposals for the Seventh Framework Programme to the EU Council and Parliament. Today, with the launching of FP7, that journey has finally come to an end.

Since April 2005, there have been over 1600 suggested amendments to the original proposals. The Programme has been discussed in almost every EU institution. We have had opinions from nearly everyone. And there has been a continuous attempt to find a common position.

It hasn't always been easy. In that time, there have been:

- diverging opinions, such as on sensitive issues like funding stem cell research
- delays, such as the one affecting the EU's budget
- and disappointments, for example over the size of the increase of the research budget, which was lower than the Commission's proposal.

But throughout, there have been compromises on all sides. I wouldn't be standing here today without them.

**And I have to say I am pleased and proud of what we are launching today. It is an amazing leap forward.**

Over these next two days, you are going to hear many details on FP7 and how it works. So I will not spoil that treat for you. Many of you are already familiar with FP7's structures and content anyway, as the research community provided valuable input into its formulation.

Today, I want to talk about how FP7 is an achievement in itself, but is also part of a much larger picture. A picture of the future with research at its centre.

FP7 has a longer duration, a higher budget, a willingness to take risks, a greater simplification and many other benefits. But this is just the start.

As I say, today represents the end of a long road. But it is also the beginning of an even longer one. The next seven years will not only see a bigger, bolder Framework programme. They will also see an increasing dependence on research as Europe continues to build a knowledge society.

**Today we are at a crossroads.** Crossroads mean making choices. Where to go next? How to get there? These are the questions facing Europe.

It is probably easier to say where we do not want to go.

Competing on low wages, at the expense of social security or on the back of our environment is not an option.

We also do not have natural resources that can make nations rich. Recent events in the energy field have made this very clear: the EU has less than 1 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, 2 percent of the world's natural gas reserves and only 4 percent of the world's proven coal reserves.

Today, Europe can - and must - compete on knowledge.

**Why?** because we have the resources.

We have well educated people.

We have the facilities.

We have the ability to turn this knowledge into services and products.

And we know that these services and products are valuable.

This is the road for Europe. There is no turning back. And now we have to prepare ourselves better to travel this road.

FP7 is a first step. But Europe needs much more. And it could learn some lessons from the steps FP7 has taken. Let me give you a few examples.

**First, Europe needs to do what FP7 has done dedicating more money to research.** I am not the first, nor will I be the last, politician saying that his area needs a higher budget. But the case for investing in research if we want to find the answers for today and tomorrow becomes increasingly convincing.

And I call on governments not just for putting more resources into research. I also call on them to help improve the framework conditions for innovation in Europe so that the private sector invests more in research and development.

**Second, FP7 highlights the value of more cooperation.** International cooperation and horizontal cooperation across thematic priorities and disciplines has been reinforced and mainstreamed in the programme. We need more cooperation in Europe. We must remember that in research we are 'Team Europe'. The last thing any team needs is players tackling each another. We must understand that, like in any team sport, we win together and we lose together.

Just over 12 years ago, the EU was a club of just 12 countries. Now we are 27. That makes us not only bigger, but also stronger: The "new" Member States bring a lot of European enthusiasm.

**Third, FP7 has made research more accessible and simpler.** We need to do this wherever possible. How can research be effective if the best brains are turned away by bureaucracy, delays and confusing instructions?

FP7 hasn't introduced greater simplification by accident. We have listened to the feedback of the researchers and scientists. And we have tried to put it right wherever possible:

Now participants will only have to register once, there will be a single help desk service, we have set up a guarantee fund to alleviate the need for financial assurances, we have made manuals easier to understand and we have reduced reporting and auditing requirements.

**And the ideas do not stop at FP7. Let me tell you about the next step.**

Now that the Seventh Framework Programme is up and running, it is time to look again at how research is organised and carried out in the European Research Area.

This area extends beyond the EU, but the EU can give the political impetus to breaking down barriers.

And there certainly are barriers to be torn down. Most of the scientists I meet tell me how they experience fragmentation and duplication across Europe.

**So this year, I plan to review how the European Research Area is working.** I want to see how easy it is for researchers

- to move between facilities and organisations
- to have their qualifications recognised
- to take their benefits with them
- to maintain their career development
- to find new opportunities in both the public and private sectors
- to easily access funding sources
- to use the most advanced infrastructures
- and many other aspects.

In short, I want to see how many internal research walls we have knocked down since the European Research Area was first suggested seven years ago.

I know that we have made some progress already. The previous Framework Programmes have helped achieve this. But this year, I want to come forward with new ideas about making the ERA stronger. It will, in effect, be 'a new era for the ERA'.

I want to see how we can create a 'United States of Research', with a base in Europe. And here I don't mean 'states' just in the sense of countries of nation states or Member States. I mean states as in states of development, states of cooperation, states of innovation – in short, states of the future, united and working together.

The world has changed and we need a common market where the key new currency of knowledge can pass freely.

**We need to act now, for several reasons.** The debate about the new EU constitution is moving back up the political agenda. And the EU will look at its budget again in 2009.

These two events are about more than just institutional reform or money. They are about the future direction and shape of the EU. We cannot let research be neglected. We need to show research's importance for all of Europe, and beyond.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a saying that 'all politics is local'. So let me say a few words about the research situation here in Germany.

Firstly, I'd like to congratulate our German friends for putting on this conference, which also marks the start of the German Presidency, at least in research.

I look forward to working with Minister Schavan and her team in the coming months. And I thank Minister-President Rüttgers, a former Education and Science Minister himself, for his hospitality today.

The Commission will probably be keeping the German Presidency busy during the next six months. In research, this means that we will be putting forward the first proposals for Joint Technology Initiatives as well as proposals for better coordination of national and EU research systems and policies.

Germany is a key part of European research. It is the largest player in the Framework Programme. In FP6 Germany took part in more than 3000 projects with 7000 participants.

So I do not need to convince you that research at European level has a real added value. You know already that it offers collaboration, facilities, mobility and results which are simply not possible at national level. And crucially, it helps reduce fragmentation and duplication found in and across countries.

The expectations on FP7 will be very high and so they should be. After all **FP7 is the world's biggest single publicly funded research programme**. But I am confident that we can deliver.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is about more than just a new EU Framework programme. **It is about science coming out of the shadows and out of the laboratories**. People are more aware of the benefits it brings. Three out of four Europeans believe that there will be more opportunities for future generations because of science and technology.

But I hope that we can get even more people to appreciate what research is contributing to society.

We know that research shapes our lives on every level. We need to make sure others know too. Research makes us understand the big challenges and changes, let's just think of climate change. Understanding a problem is already half of the solution.

Research also brings solutions. It influences the fuel our cars use now and in the future, the health information that decides our diets for the New Year, the cures for our latest illnesses, the technology that keeps us in touch.

And research is not just about scientists in white coats or 'nerds'. Science can be cool. We can make it increasingly cool.

Look at the number of researchers who have made their fortunes through their work. The founders of Google, Skype or YouTube are making headlines, but there are many others.

Let's think of a cool product.

If it was the latest mobile phone, it's thanks to research.

If it was an MP3 player or an iPod, it's thanks to research.

If it was the navigation systems in our cars or now even handbags, it's thanks to research.

I will finish by pointing out that, although my speech's title is 'Tomorrow's answer starts today', we can learn a lot from what happened in the past too.

In 1963, US President John F Kennedy visited this city. He saw then, as the EU sees now, the many challenges facing society. For him, it was the Cold War, for us it is global warming. For him, it was putting men on the moon, for us, it is exploring Mars. And of course many other different, but equally enormous, challenges.

President Kennedy was determined to address these challenges. But he was a realist. He knew that every effort begins with the first step.

He said: *'All this will not be finished in the first 100 days, nor the first 1,000 days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.'*

I can think of no better way to launch FP7 than to see it in this perspective. We know the challenges. We know research will play a key role. We know this will take time.

But I say to us all today: 'Let us begin'.

Thank you.