

Good afternoon to everybody,

I gave a presentation of the upcoming work of the BE presidency at the ERAB conference in Seville in May, and in the meantime we are now more than halfway the BE Presidency. So I guess you are interested in having a short overview of what we have accomplished till now, and what we are still planning to do.

One of our priorities is simplification, and we have already put a lot of work into this by adopting Council conclusions last week at our first Competitiveness Council for Research. These were a response to the COM communication on this theme of end of May. Our conclusions contain 15 concrete points to implement immediately, and which will facilitate the researchers' life in dealing with FP projects. Then there are several points which require an adaptation of either the financial regulation and-or the rules of participation – these measures will require more time, as they are submitted to the co-decision procedure. But we do hope that some of these measures will already be implemented still in the last calls under FP7. We also made suggestions for the next FP, the longer term, to experiment with a more result-based or how we called it 'science-based' approach. Here, we followed the 10th 'commandment' of ERAB.

As we really think simplification needs to remain high on the political agenda, today, tomorrow but even more with a view to the next FP and the new Innovation Partnerships that were proposed, our minister has set up an informal ministerial group composed of 3 countries, besides BE: FR, SE and HU, which will continue to monitor the progress made in this field by all stakeholders involved, be it the Commission, but also the MS and Council (ECOFIN in particular) and the EP. They will draft a first intermediary

report by end of November, to be presented at the second Competitiveness Council, followed by a second report under HU Presidency.

We adopted another set of Conclusions on the first wave of JPIs (the first three) so now all stakeholders are more than mandated to start work on these. As the pilot on Alzheimer already was launched 2 years, we thought it was high time to get into action, real action we suggested to try to launch a first call of proposals still this year on one or two themes which are most urgent. You will hear more details on this very soon, as this is in the hands of the Scientific Board of the initiative that will decide on these themes at their next meeting the day after tomorrow.

Now, on the Innovation Union Flagship, the long expected communication which finally arrived ! There, I really must congratulate ERAB as many of your recommendations are reflected in it. The IU communication was presented and discussed for the first time at the Competitiveness Council last week, and the Minister's responses helped us in finalizing the draft Council conclusions we submitted and already started amending both in the Research and Compro Working Group. Our CC are long and very ambitious: but we must be ambitious if we want to be in time to respond to the societal challenges, to continue to be competitive on a global scale and to keep the standard of living in Europe in general. The CC are composed of 3 parts:

1. first you have an empty box: the key messages to the European Council of December that will address innovation. We left the box empty for a start - of course the Presidency has ideas of how to fill this in, but also President Van Rompuy has, and also President Barroso... but we want to know, first and foremost, what MSs

consider to be the priorities to be taken to level of Heads of State. So we have asked each MS to come up with 1 or 2 main priorities and in a few weeks' time, when we will all have digested the 43 pages of IU, we are sure we will be able to distill these key messages more easily. This is a totally new and very important role that has been given to the Competitiveness Council, so we should not act too hastily.

2. the second part is the political response to the Communication as such,
3. the third part is quite innovative: it is a roadmap, listing every action in IU but stating clearly whose responsibility it is, and by when to accomplish it. This roadmap is not to be accepted as such, if MSs argue that this or that action is too ambitious or not realistic, the idea is to adjust it, the timing, or the output of the action, whatever is necessary to make it feasible. This roadmap will enable us to measure the ambition of MSs and, later, also to monitor the implementation of all these actions.

It is not my intention to respond to the whole report point by point, as some points I have already raised and I am running out of time here. But let me focus on one more:

the Community patent: yes, it certainly is our goal to find an agreement under the BE presidency and we are putting a lot of effort into achieving this. Unfortunately, it does not only depend on us.... So hopefully, we will not have to list this as a key message for the European Council anymore.

Then there is something new I would like to suggest to ERAB for the short term: the Innovation Partnerships. There are many questions coming from the MS on the Innovation Partnerships that are proposed in IU. The

Commission has presented some ideas on their implementation and their governance, but they remain still too unclear. There, I see a role for ERAB, to look into this into detail and write a recommendation. With the extended remit of ERAB, this might be an interesting and also important exercise by which you would help not only the Commission but also the MS in endorsing the concept of IP. All the more that if the pilot Partnership on Active and healthy ageing turns out to be a success, the IP might determine the design of the next FP. This could be an option, but only if the concept of IP is well accepted by the MS and that there is trust in these, which, today, is not yet the case. I think ERAB can give a helping hand there, but it will have to be done quite urgently.