



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion concerning the proposal for Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) {COM(2011) 808_809_810_811 final}, and apologises for the long delay in replying.

The Commission thanks the Senato della Repubblica in particular for the strong support for Horizon 2020 expressed in its Opinion. Although in formal terms the Horizon 2020 proposal is now with the European Parliament and Council, the Commission is open to hear any new ideas being put forward and will keep your specific suggestions in mind as the negotiation process continues.

What concerns the remarks the Senato della Repubblica has made in its Opinion, the Commission would like to provide the following replies and clarifications:

The objectives of the 'Food security, sustainable agriculture, marine and maritime research and the bio-economy' challenge indeed do not specifically mention genetically modified organisms (GMOs). This should however not be interpreted as if research on GMOs will not be pursued. The challenge specifically mentions the use of modern plant optimisation techniques, including the use of molecular tools, and therefore takes into account genetic modification techniques and GMOs.

Regarding the 'Secure, clean and efficient energy' challenge, the Commission would like to underline that the climate policy goals for 2050 represent the political ambition of the European Council at this stage and are not legally binding. In particular, they are contingent on securing a global deal on climate change with all nations. Careful consideration needs to be given to international developments and technological progress before any such binding commitment for 2050 would be endorsed by the EU Member States.

What concerns the objectives and targets of the 'Transport' challenge, they are in line with those set out in key EU policy documents, adopted by the Commission and endorsed by the Council of the EU. As stated in Horizon 2020, the proposed objectives and the broad lines of the corresponding R&I activities are defined to contribute to the achievement of those policy goals and targets, but they are certainly not the only tools to be used for that purpose. The development, and eventually the deployment, of innovative

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technologies, products, solutions and services stemming from R&I activities, including those funded by Horizon 2020, will lead to significant progress towards achieving these goals. They have however to be complemented by substantial investments in transport means, infrastructure and services, as well as by legislative and regulatory measures to be introduced at European, national and local level. The activities to be supported by Horizon 2020 represent a substantial, but not self-sufficient component of the European strategy to achieve the Europe 2020 goals.

The challenge 'Climate action, resource efficiency and raw materials' contains a sub-challenge, dedicated to the development of climate change adaptation options, and this objective is also reflected in other parts of Horizon 2020, such as agriculture, transport and energy. Adaptation is however not less costly than mitigation policies, since without mitigation the costs of adaptation may become unbearable. This is why the EU has agreed to enforce ambitious mitigation policies, with a view of achieving the international goal, set at UNFCCC level, to maintain the average temperature growth below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels. The increase of temperature is much higher in the polar areas, but the impact of this – in particular due to the melting of Greenland and Antarctica ice sheets – is affecting all continents. Abandoning the 2°C goal is not an option, and the EU has a common position on this, as all models agree that higher-end scenarios increase exponentially the cost of damages. It may be a consequence of low-ambition mitigation policies, but there are signals – e.g. the fast growth of renewable energy in China and in the US, or their ambitious energy efficiency programmes – that show that major economies have understood the strategic need to develop low-carbon and no-carbon technologies, and this is considered as an area of major economic growth for the future. The target of 35% of climate-related spending in Horizon 2020 is closely linked to this strategic view.

Concerning the scope of the 'Inclusive, innovative and secure societies' challenge, and the possible inclusion of support for protecting and enhancing the cultural heritage of the EU, the Commission would like to recall that both issues are still being debated in the Parliament and the Council. The Commission will support the Council's and the European Parliament's endeavour to ensure that the above mentioned objectives can successfully be implemented.

On the point concerning the need to ensure synergies with the Cohesion policy, the Commission would like to underline that Union funding is already assisting in building up and spreading R&I across the regions of Europe both through the Seventh Framework Programme and the Cohesion policy funds. The 'Regions of Knowledge' and 'Research Potential' activities of the FP7 Capacities specific programme have been met with great interest, but evidence suggests that it would be more efficient if similar actions were pursued under Cohesion policy. Therefore the Commission proposes a clearer division of labour between Horizon 2020 and the Structural Funds, while strengthening interactions. Support for regions in building up their research and innovation capacity will be provided through Cohesion policy, which will take forward the concept of smart specialisation and include measures to allow researchers and innovators across Europe to grow into excellence. Complementary measures under Horizon 2020 will aim at widening participation across the whole of the programme.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the questions raised in your Opinion and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue with the Senato della Repubblica in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*