



## **Speech by Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič at the Inauguration of the European Interoperability Centre for Electric Vehicles and Smart Grids**

Ispira, 29 October 2015

Thank you, Mr Šucha, for your introductory remarks.

Mr Mac Williams, Ambassador Gardner, distinguished guests,

Let me start by thanking you for the opportunity to address you today. Events like this one offer a great opportunity for EU decision-makers to engage and interact with industry, policy makers, regulators, research organisations, academic institutions and standardisation bodies from both sides of the Atlantic.

This dialogue with the main stakeholders is an important part of the Energy Union. This is a bottom-up project. We need to actively engage the actors on the ground and look at our energy transformation not from a self-centred perspective but from a global one. Building bridges with our main partners.

The EU Interoperability Center showcases at least two of our priority objectives: we need to develop robust research, innovation and competitiveness strategy (the fifth pillar of the Energy Union) and a strong transatlantic partnership.

### 1. A robust research innovation and competitiveness strategy

Moving towards more energy-efficient and decarbonised transport is a major part of our Energy Union research, innovation and competitiveness agenda. The Energy Union Strategy foresees a set of concrete actions in this direction, including the transformation towards carbon free or less carbon intensive fuels, the improvement of vehicle efficiency and the efficient management of transport demand.

In this context, electrification of transport offers a unique opportunity for Europe and the US to simultaneously decarbonise transport; reduce dependence on oil; improve air quality in our cities; create jobs and growth; and for industrial innovation.

With only one month left before the COP-21 negotiations start in Paris, I can only reiterate the critical role of e-mobility in making the global economy carbon neutral by the end of the century.

Speeding up the electrification of our car fleet and other means of transport requires a full integration of electric vehicles in urban mobility policies and in the electricity grid, both as energy consumers and potential storage facilities. This means that we will need to look not only at our energy and transport systems but also at our digital market.

This complex endeavour, with medium and long-term implications on our competitiveness and mobility, will inevitably need to be built upon:

- Compatible and interoperable standards
- Effective and realistic harmonized testing procedures
- Strong and reliable evidence, to accompany, support and implement our policy choices.

All this will be done through the European e-mobility Interoperability Centre that I am delighted that we can inaugurate today. But this is also a case-in-point of the broadening and deepening of our transatlantic scientific and technical cooperation.

### 2. Our transatlantic partnership

This Tuesday I came back from the US. This visit showed me that our strategic partnership on the energy and innovation fronts is alive and kicking. I found fully engaged interlocutors, first amongst which Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz. Engaged in the energy transformation and the preparation of COP21, determined to reap the benefits of joined-up research and innovation, convinced that the

strengthening of our economic ties will be mutually beneficial.

Harmonised industrial standards and test procedures play a key role in that respect. They will reduce trade and technical barriers, and allow different systems from global suppliers to work together.

It is for this reason that the European Commission in-house science service, the JRC, together with the U.S. Department of Energy (DoE), are leveraging their experience and state-of-the-art facilities to enable universal connectivity and interoperability between electric vehicles (EV) and electric charging infrastructure.

The investment in pre-normative research facilities fully supports the political goals mentioned above.

The new JRC laboratories will face the challenge – together with their US twins at the Argonne National Laboratories – to help creating “a common language” that the entire chain from the energy source to the electric vehicle, can speak and understand.

Given the fruitful exchanges between the two sides that Vladimir already mentioned and the expected impact of the work of the two Interoperability Centres, it is not surprising that this endeavour constitutes a lab-to-lab flagship collaboration for e-mobility and smart grids interoperability under both Transatlantic Economic Council and the EU-US Energy Council. It offers a model that could be usefully replicated in other fields of relevance for the EU-US partnership.

I would like to take this opportunity to recall the potential of the TTIP to improve procedures related to technical regulations, standards, and conformity assessment, and promote good regulatory practice generally. By the same token, it aims to protect the competence of the governments to regulate in order to ensure efficient and reliable energy markets, and high level of health, safety and environmental protection.

This cooperation between the United States and Europe is underpinned by long-standing scientific ties at both EU and Member State levels. On new technologies, for instance, we are working together not only on electric vehicles and smart grids, but also nuclear fusion, hydrogen fuel cells, critical materials and other fields.

As a way of conclusion, I would recall that the 21st century will no longer be about who has the biggest reserves of oil, gas or coal. The leaders of the new economy will be those who can find the best technological solutions for integrating sustainable energy, such as renewables sources into electricity grids. This is why I have said in the past that, put simply and catchy, Smart grids could become “Europe shale gas”.

Today, I am proud that the European Commission, through JRC Interoperability Centre, is directly involved in finding the most advanced, most competitive, and most economically viable solutions.

I think it is fair to say that JRC plays a defining role in providing EU policy-making with top-class scientific evidence, with robust data, with thorough intelligence and analysis.

And it does so with the best partners in this field, as can be witnessed today.

I know we can count on your support to make that partnership a great success.

Thank you for your attention.

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