

European Research Excellence – Impact and Value for Society

Estonian Presidency Research Policy Conference
12 October 2017
Tallinn, Estonia

Background: The aim of the Conference is to demonstrate to policymakers that excellent research is essential to addressing Europe's challenges and for increasing competitiveness. The Conference is timely, as research is under considerable pressure across Europe. Public expectations for science to solve societal challenges are increasing. At the same time, we observe a decline in political commitment towards funding. Whilst there are expectations on realising the immediate economic benefits of research, it is also vital that we demonstrate the indirect economic and social benefits of public investment. Truly transformative effects lie in new and unpredictable scientific and technological discoveries, which lay the foundations for new industries, markets and broader social renewal. The Conference will demonstrate the value of research, build a case for investing in research and innovation, and aim to strengthen political commitment for ambitious long-term public investment in European R&I. It encourages a perspective that goes beyond a short timescale and focuses instead on a long-term vision.

The Conference brings together internationally-outstanding scientists and policymakers from many EU countries, as well as a range of stakeholders from academia, business, and civil society. It will encourage an open debate on how excellent research generates societal and economic added-value and how we nurture the framework post-2020. By sharing knowledge, best practice and experience, the Conference will generate positive and strong messages that speak to the wider audience beyond the auditorium. The Conference aims to influence the debate on European research policy in the lead-up to the next Framework Programme. The outcome of the EU Presidency Conference will be presented in a final declaration, the **Tallinn Call for Action**.

Moderator for the Conference is **Brian Cox**, *University of Manchester*

PROGRAMME

9.00-9.30 Registration

9.30-10.00 Welcome and opening addresses

- *Mailis Reps, Estonian Minister of Education and Research*
- *Carlos Moedas, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation (video message)*

10.00-10:30 Keynote speech: *Mark Ferguson, member of the High-Level Group on maximising the impact of EU Research and Innovation Programmes*

10.30 Coffee break



PLENARY SESSION I

Expecting the unexpected: frontier research brings the future closer

The aim of the session is to make the case for why Europe needs investment in bottom-up, interdisciplinary and visionary research. Frontier research is still often perceived in terms of “pure science” or “science for science’s sake”. Despite the high-potential gain, it can involve significant costs and the risk of failure. Today’s R&D systems are not conducive to frontier research. There is increasing pressure for scientists to show that their research is generating impact and success. New arguments are needed to convince the public and decision-makers that investing in frontier research pays off over time, even if the outcome is unpredictable. The narrowing of objectives, opportunities and strategies, as well as an obsession with measuring impact in science, reflects an erosion of trust. This has the risk of reducing the effectiveness of scientific discovery, for example, the choice of research topics is becoming more conservative. In a rapidly-changing world, we must be more flexible and risk-taking, otherwise we will not be able to respond to the next unexpected challenge we meet. This calls on the R&D system to generate new knowledge that we perhaps cannot imagine. By being open and curious, frontier research can bring about truly disruptive innovation, built on radically new ideas. In the light of upcoming debates on the next EU multi-annual financial framework and programmes, it is crucial that bottom-up high-risk activity is included.

11.00-11.15 Showcase: *Valeria Nicolosi, Professor of Nanomaterials and Advanced Microscopy, Trinity College Dublin*

11.15-12.15 Panel discussion

Panellists:

- *Birgitte Nauntofte, Director, Novo Nordisk Foundation*
- *Pim Tuyls, CEO, Intrinsic ID*

12.15 Lunch

PLENARY SESSION II

From impact to value of research: providing the rationale for investing in research

Research and innovation lie at the heart of most developed countries’ economic strategies and make a critical contribution to society and culture. Nonetheless, there is a constant challenge to research in the competition for public investment. Recent studies provide evidence that investment in research and innovation has very high returns but this has not convinced sceptical politicians and the public that research is a sound investment. The second plenary brings together key people to discuss the value of research, provide sound arguments for investment in research and innovation, address current issues in approaches to assessment and how to integrate the long-term impact of research investment in economic models.



13.30-14.45 Panel discussion

Panellists:

- *Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, President, European Research Council (ERC)*
- *Ola Erstad, Chair of the Science Europe Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)*
- *Luc Soete, Rector Magnificus, Maastricht University, Chair of the HLG RISE*
- *Günter Stock, Chair of the Board of SAPEA (Science Advice for Policy by European Academies), President, All-European Academies (ALLEA)*
- *Vladimir Šucha, Director-General, Joint Research Centre (JRC)*

14.45 Coffee break

15.15 PLENARY SESSION III

Form and function: design of European research and innovation policies for global competitiveness

In the light of preparations for the next EU Framework and other programmes, the Conference will promote discussion on how to design a research and innovation system that can exploit untapped research potential, advance a science-based society and develop a more competitive Europe post-2020. Europe has set a vision of open science and innovation as the new *modus operandi* for science. How can we ensure that research and innovation policies designed today will meet the needs of the next generation of researchers, as well as citizens and policymakers? How can we make Europe an attractive place to do science and innovation, with talent from around the world? What is the role of the framework programme in advancing research and innovation in other EU policies? How can we fund the best research in emerging, fast-growing areas and help strengthen European competitiveness in relation to technological innovation? In the context of the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020, the session will take stock of lessons learned and address the necessary framework conditions for the next programming period. It will contribute ideas and proposals for the next Framework Programme, including synergy with Structural Funds and national strategies.

15.15-15.25 Showcase: *Nicole Grobert, Professor of Nanomaterials, University of Oxford*

15.25-15.35 Presentation: *Dominique Guellec, Head of the Science and Technology Policy Division of the Directorate for Science, Technology and Innovation, OECD*



15.35-16.30 Panel discussion

Panellists:

- *Gemma Galdon Clavell, Founder and Director, Eticas Research & Consulting*
- *Ciara Judge, Co-Founder and Co-Director, Germinaid Innovations, grand prize-winner at the Google Science Fair 2014*
- *Martin Kern, Interim Director, European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)*
- *Siim Sikkut, Deputy Secretary General for Communications and State Information Systems, Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications*

PLENARY SESSION IV

Tallinn Call for Action: next steps in promoting European research excellence

In the final session, the Conference declaration, the Tallinn Call for Action, will be handed over to stakeholders. It includes the main messages of the Conference, emphasising the role of excellent research in the context of a changing research environment and a changing Europe. The concluding panel discussions will involve representatives from civil society, policymakers, business, science and innovation, and regional and local authorities - all stakeholders targeted by the Call for Action. The session focuses on steps to implement the messages of the Call for Action.

16.30-16.45 Handing over of the Tallinn Call for Action

16.45-17.30 Concluding panel discussion

Panellists:

- *Janusz Bujnicki, Member of the High Level Group of Scientific Advisors of the EC Scientific Advice Mechanism*
- *Axel Heinrich, Head of Research at the Volkswagen Group (VW AG)*
- *Marina Huzvarova, Vice-President of the European Union of Science Journalists' Associations (EUSJA)*
- *Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General for Research and Innovation, European Commission*
- *Sven Stafström, Director-General, Swedish Research Council*



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