

Debate & Analysis

Horizon 2020: A programme for Europe, an opportunity for Malta



Maire Geoghegan-Quinn

With a budget of nearly €80 billion over seven years, Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU research and innovation programme yet and one of the largest in the world.

Maire Geoghegan-Quinn is European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science

Horizon 2020 offers therefore a great opportunity for Maltese researchers, universities and companies. Horizon 2020 will fund the whole innovation chain: from the best fundamental research to close to market innovation. It will also support Europe's recovering economy, because we know that investment in research and innovation means growth and jobs.

Maltese researchers drew some €17 million in funding from the previous EU research programme (FP7), with greatest success in the areas of Information and Communication Technologies, transport, and research for SMEs. But they have been less successful generally than their counterparts elsewhere in the EU. Under Horizon 2020, I want that to change.

With science budgets in many countries under pressure, competition for Horizon 2020 re-



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sources will be intense. So to make things simpler, we have cut bureaucracy and made the programme more coherent, so researchers and businesses will spend less time filling out

forms and can spend more time on investigating and developing their ideas. The new research programme is one of the few areas of the new EU budget that sees a major increase in resources and I am determined that this additional money is invested wisely.

Excellence cannot be everywhere – but I do believe that excellence can spring up anywhere. Horizon 2020 will therefore support twinning of different regions, staff exchanges and – alongside European structural funds – will provide financial support where it is needed to raise performance. These new instruments present Maltese research and innovation actors with the opportunity to create partnerships with established centres of excellence elsewhere in the EU. Such partnerships will help build the capacity that will elevate Malta's research and innovation system to the highest European standards.

Maltese SMEs were active participants in FP7, capturing nearly 40% of research funding to the islands compared with an EU average of just over 15%, and I want to see them involved strongly again. Horizon 2020 offers more money than ever before for small companies – some €9 billion over the next seven years, including €3 billion through a dedicated SME Instrument. New financing options in the form of risk-sharing to support innovative SMEs could also be interesting for Maltese companies.

These are just some of the very good reasons why I want many more researchers, universities, businesses and innovators from Malta to participate in Horizon 2020. Whether you are a scientist with a ground-breaking research idea; an SME that is ready to test an innovative new product in a brand new market; or a university aiming for excellence – there is a place in Horizon 2020 for you.

Let us vote!



Artur Mas

It is a fundamental principle of European democracy that the great issues of public interest, indeed of the future of the state, can and must be resolved by the wishes of the people.

Artur Mas is the President of Catalonia

The people of Catalonia – one of Europe's oldest nations – want and deserve the opportunity to decide for themselves whether to become a new state within Europe.

The majority of Catalonia's citizens have made clear, in elections and public demonstrations, that they want to vote on their own future. A million and a half men, women and children took to the streets last September, joining hands to symbolise their solidarity and freedom, as the Baltic peoples did in 1989. No true democrat can ignore or deny the power of that popular will.

As mandated by our voters, the Catalan Government and most opposition parties have together decided to hold a popular vote on self-determination on 9 November 2014. Catalonians will be asked a two-part question: "Do you want Catalonia to be a state? If so, do you want Catalonia to be an independent state?" Nobody has anything to fear from

these simple questions, except perhaps those who want to pretend that the wishes of the people should be ignored.

The relationship between Catalonia and Spain is not what it might be. Our political rights within Spain, enshrined in our Statute of Autonomy agreed with the Spanish Parliament and later endorsed by a referendum in 2006, were unilaterally revoked by a contested Spanish court ruling in July 2010.

My government, with the support of 65% of the Catalan Parliament, plans a referendum that will be conducted openly, transparently and peacefully. We regret that the Spanish Government's response so far has been hostile, but we must all stay true to the universal values that lie at the heart of Europe – to quote from the EU Treaty, "the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom and democracy." The Catalan people's desire for a vote on our future will not simply go away, even if it is ignored.

Any effort to mute or deny the will of the Catalan people will fail.

We will do what we can to promote a calm and common-sense discussion with EU member states and the European institutions about how a choice by the Catalan people to pursue their own state should be implemented. Uncertainty is disruptive, and does not serve anyone's interests. We are confident that pragmatic and creative solutions can be found, as long as we start from the premise that the democratically expressed will of the people is paramount.

Catalonia is a part of Europe, and Catalans are European. Twelve centuries ago, Charlemagne established us as the southern march of his empire. We want to play our full part in a peaceful and prosperous European Union, which we joined three decades ago. We are committed to maintain and implement common EU laws and regulations. We will celebrate and protect the cosmo-

politan diversity of both our people and of Europe at large. We will strive to support a common European approach to resolving problems, including the Euro and the health of the European economy. And we will always be good neighbours to those across our borders, including our Spanish friends, ready to assist in time of need.

There is no doubt that the 9 November referendum on the future of Catalonia, coming as it does on the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, presents many challenges for Catalonia, for Spain and for the European Union. But it cannot be wished away. With calm, with good sense, and with a pragmatic political outlook, the referendum and any subsequent transition is an opportunity for Europe to once again demonstrate to the rest of the world its great qualities and capacities for addressing challenges peacefully, democratically, and in the spirit of freedom that lies at the heart of our continental union.

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