

**Opening remarks at the European  
Parliament**

**January 13, 2010**

**Mrs. Máire Geoghegan Quinn**

**European Commissioner Designate**

**Research Innovation and Science**

**Check against delivery**

Mr Chairman, Members of the ITRE committee,

*Téann an fhreagracht agus an dialóg oscailte go smior sa daonlathas Eorpach.*

*Dá réir sin, tagaim in bhur láthair inniu le dul i mbun comhrá libh agus súil agam go gceadóidh sibh mé a ainmniú mar bhall den Choimisiún Eorpach amach anseo agus freagrachtaí orm as Taighde, Nuálaíocht agus Eolaíocht.*

*Ba mhaith liom a mheas go sásóidh a bhfuil le rá agam libh anseo inniu na caighdeáin a mbíonn súil leo sa teach seo.*

*Is polaiteoir mé atá paiseanta faoin Eoraip agus a chreideann go daingean sa daonlathas Parlaiminteach.*

*Ba mhaith liom ar dtús, mar sin, cur síos a dhéanamh daoibh ar an bhfís atá agam, ar mo chuid taithí agus ar mo chuid prionsabal.*

*[English translation: Accountability and dialogue are at the heart of our European democracy. In that spirit, I hope that my appearance before you to approve my designation as a future member of the European Commission with*

responsibility for research, innovation and science, will meet the expectations of this house.

As a politician who is passionate about Europe, and committed to Parliamentary democracy, I would like to start by setting out my convictions, my experience and my vision.]

Since I first canvassed for a yes vote to EEC Membership in 1972, my political career has been intertwined with Ireland working at the heart of Europe, and of Europe transforming the hearts and minds of Irish people.

In my long career as an elected representative and Minister, the European Union's ability to change the context of seemingly intractable problems, has been an inspirational force for me.

In my Ministerial experience working for Ireland's rapid transformation to a peaceful and progressive society and a creative knowledge economy - Europe has been the innovating force.

As a longstanding Member of the European Court of Auditors I have gained a deeper insight into the workings of the European Union.

I believe that in times of crisis, those of us in public life have a public duty to optimism. This Parliament is living witness to the power of the political imagination to innovate, to reconcile and to overcome. Fifty years of peaceful coexistence. A Single Market. The Euro. The peaceful post-cold war reunification of our continent.

Our Europe is a maker and shaper of change. At heart, our Union is an Innovation Union. Integration is innovation.

In facing the steep political climb ahead to tackle recovery, climate change and a low carbon economy, we should for a moment, remember our achievements, and take heart for the road ahead.

If approved, I would continue to uphold our European democratic, social, economic and ethical values.

## II

With the Lisbon Treaty in place - we need to move from a decade of debate about Europe, to a decade of delivery for Europeans.

The “transformational agenda” of President Barroso’s “Political Guidelines” confirm this.

The new proposed portfolio title of Research, Innovation and Science confirms his commitment to harness the power of knowledge to drive this transformation.

Fundamentally, my task would involve moving research, innovation and science to the heart of European policy.

### III

To achieve this, the European Union must become a true Innovation Union.

An innovation culture places change management and openness at the heart of all we do.

A true Innovation Union would support markets that are open to newcomers and incentivise investment.

Research that tests frontiers, applies breakthroughs, deepens scientific know-how, connects researchers and delivers outcomes.

Innovation means knowing when to co-operate and when to compete in a tough international marketplace.

## **IV**

Knowledge, research and scientific excellence is a cornerstone of innovation.

In the new economy, refined knowledge will replace crude oil as the economy's prime motive force.

As part of an EU 2020 vision, the Commission would undertake a cross-cutting reform agenda that will connect up and speed up innovation along the policy chain from research to retail. Building on Janez Potocnik's impressive legacy, a common vision for research, innovation and science needs to be mapped out and delivered.

From now on we should start by defining Research policy challenges, and then adapt our instruments accordingly.

These European Research and Innovation reforms would have two strategic aims:

- to deliver a Single Market for Innovation
- to complete the European Research Area,

## **V**

We must map out and act to address the barriers and missing links of innovation. A Single Market for Innovation could be prepared and delivered by the European Commission in partnership with members of this Committee.

Regulatory requirements including patents, public procurement and standards merit review. Learning from the successes financed by the European Investment Bank, incentives for investment and financing market instruments for new ventures could be examined.

## **VI**

In the Research Pillar, if approved as a member of the European Commission, I would set out a Research policy framework with 3 priorities:

- Completing the European Research Area,
- Addressing Societies Grand Challenges,
- And Creating an Innovation Research Culture.

First on Completing the European Research Area – this means developing the 5 ERA initiatives of Research Careers, Joint Programming, Infrastructure, Knowledge Transfer and International Cooperation.

We need to make the Fifth Freedom for the mobility of researchers, knowledge and technology throughout Europe a reality. Our researchers need to be able to travel and work in other Member States and enjoy fully protected social security and pension entitlements.

We know that the 3 % Barcelona target is very important. But to achieve it, we need to enable a better investment climate for research.

The importance of encouraging frontier research through an independent European Research Council cannot be overstated.

We must avoid fragmentation and duplication of effort through greater Joint Programming.

Secondly we need to place the Grand Challenges facing our Society at the heart of our research agenda.

Climate change is *the* area where Research has changed hearts and minds. Next, we need research to explore how climate change will impact on the lives of our citizens.

On energy, we need to deliver the Strategic Energy and Technology (SET) plan and to invest in a wide and diverse range of solutions to address our energy needs.



On healthy ageing we need new medical approaches to transform the people's quality of life in an ageing society.

Communicating the benefits and outcomes of research to the public will be critical to public support for Research policy.

Thirdly, creating an Innovation Research culture. Research - properly managed can lead to incredible innovation. We need to fast-forward innovative research by supporting Joint Technology Initiatives and preparing conducive market conditions in related Lead Markets.

The research workplace needs to evolve to empower more women to play their full part in science.

We also need to address the increasing disconnect between science and society. Society must be familiar and at ease with the science underpinning its progress, functioning and survival.

Science must belong in Society.

The 7th EU Research Framework Programme 2007 - 2013 is the largest public research programme in the world. Within a new Research and Innovation policy

framework the Framework Programme will be seen as an instrument and not as an end in itself.

I am fully committed to engaging with the European Parliament in the interim evaluation of FP7.

The targeted participation of SMEs, remains an issue of concern requiring determined efforts into the future.

Simplifying FP7 financial and administrative procedures must be addressed.

We need a proper use of funds, proportionate controls and professional management.

We must maximise simplicity without compromising on audit or evaluation quality.

For our vital Public Private Partnerships this means more innovation-friendly operating rules and conditions.

Parliament has a critical role to play in securing an agreed and consistent institutional consensus in these matters.

A world of zero risk, is a world of zero innovation.

Finally, we need to look at how to leverage complementary structural funds resources.

## **VII**

Europe has entered the Age of Innovation. We can be followers or leaders.

Europe is at its best, when working in the future tense. Working in partnership with the European Parliament and this committee we can move forward.

Together we *can* make a difference. We *need* to make a difference.

**END**