



**Presentation of the priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU
in the area of research and innovation**

before the

**Industry, Research and Energy Committee of the European Parliament
Krasimir Valchev, Minister for Education and Science,
Brussels, 23 January 2018**

DEAR PROF. BUZEK,

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT,

I am honoured to be here today among you in the European Parliament and to have the opportunity to work with you on important challenges for European science and research for the next six months. I rely on your support to achieve visible and sustainable results for all European citizens and, above all, to give a clear message to the young generation that their future based on knowledge and skills is important to us.

The year 2018 is a significant one for Bulgaria, because for the first time we will be assigned with the Presidency of the Council of the EU. At the same time, it is also a fundamental year for the European Union as we look forward to the Commission's proposal for the new Multiannual Financial Framework in the context of Brexit and other global and domestic challenges for the Union. In this line of thought, 2018 is also key for the European

cooperation in research and innovation as we will start work on the EU's 9th Framework Program for research and innovation.

Before presenting the main priorities, which will be the focus in the first half of 2018 of the Bulgarian Presidency, allow me to thank our Estonian colleagues. They held very intensive discussions and outlined some of the important steps which we will follow up in discussing the next priorities, the individual pillars of the Framework Program, ensuring greater participation and achieving better utilization of scientific results by society and the business.

I welcome the Resolution of the European Parliament on the Horizon 2020 mid-term evaluation and the future 9th Framework Program, where it is clearly stated that the next Framework Program should be geared towards addressing emerging challenges, new socio-economic paradigms and continuing global trends and problems. In order to reinforce the success of the program - in fact, the only unique scientific program in the world and the one with the largest budget, it will be important to work towards maintaining the level of European investment in sectors generating and developing knowledge and innovations, complementing national funding, including the Cohesion funds.

Our expectations are related to achieving a more inclusive nature and greater openness of the European Framework Program to new newcomers and new regions. The Bulgarian Presidency will provide a platform to all Member States and stakeholders for exchanging ideas on the future of the 9th Framework Program for Research and Innovation with a view to structuring and facilitating a common approach to the next Framework Program for Research and Innovation (2021- 2018) within the next presidencies of the Council of the EU.

While our primary commitment and strive of the Member States is to improve EU competitiveness through research and innovation and to modernize national research systems in order to achieve excellence, we should discuss complementary measures within the European financial instruments to reduce poverty, social isolation and slow economic growth. Our shared mission should be for a socially sustainable and a cohesive Europe.

In the context of one of the leading priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency for the realization of the Digital Single Market and building a strong digital and competitive Europe, I believe that the future of Europe is closely related to its ability to generate innovation, which is the opportunity to turn brilliant ideas into products and services that will boost economic growth and create new jobs. That is why the Bulgarian Presidency will also work on the priority "Accelerating the transfer and dissemination of knowledge, data and scientific results in support of a new generation of innovators and researchers".

Our idea as Presidency will be to work on the transfer of knowledge as the fifth freedom of the European Union. An initiative launched by the European Council in 2008. Ten years later, we need to decide what concrete measures will optimize the use of research results and how we will provide fast and open access to the research results to small and medium-sized businesses, local public organizations and society as a whole

We need to revise the Code of Practice for universities and other public research on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities and on this basis increase the attractiveness of private investments in research and innovation. Attracting private investment in the transfer of research results and new technologies could only be achieved through the public-private partnership instrument between the academic and industrial sectors.

However, the academic sector and fundamental science can hardly be developed without investments in infrastructure and connectivity, so we have high on our agenda ensuring the long-term sustainability of research infrastructures, including the e-Infrastructure. Future discoveries and knowledge development will largely depend on the capacity of scientific organizations to work with massive data exchange, to generate quality data and access it, and to have the skills to manage it.

Therefore we are setting an ambitious task for us to work towards the adoption of the European Open Science Cloud Roadmap as well as for a Council Regulation establishing a Joint Undertaking for the Development of Integrated High-Performance Computing (HPC) Infrastructure. I rely on the support of the European Parliament and on the appointment of a rapporteur for EuroHPC so that we can finish the work on the Regulation by the end of our mandate. It is extremely important that your position and knowledge is shared and heard in the Council during the negotiation process and for the reaching of a consensus on the establishment of EuroHPC.

Of course, we also have a very good cooperation with Commissioner Gabriel, with whom we are planning a joint event.

Bulgaria will have the responsibility and face the challenge to reach a consensus in the Council for the approval the new ITER baseline (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor). The results of the discussions during the Bulgarian presidency will predetermine the future of the "global" ITER project and the pursuit of the opening and exploitation of fusion for the benefit of humanity. The project is an unprecedented example of collaborative research for the benefit of global economy and science, uniting the efforts of the EU, China, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the United States.

I am extremely pleased with the support of the well-respected members of the European Parliament who have repeatedly supported the efforts of ITER's new director, prof. Bernard Bigot, to optimize the construction of the facility and to establish a cost-effective management. I also rely on the same support in the Council to approve the conclusions of the reformed project in the first quarter of this semester and to prepare the ministerial meeting with our international partners from India, USA, Japan, China and the others.

Regarding our research portfolio in the field of nuclear energy, I am convinced that it is of utmost importance for you and for the Member States to ensure the smooth extension of the Euratom Program for research and training for 2019-2020. On 10 January the Council addressed a request to the honourable Members of your Commission for an opinion on the revised Euratom research and training Regulation.

Bulgaria will host many important research and innovation forums. I will be glad to welcome you in Bulgaria. I know that some of you are already engaged in the High-Level Conference on Long-Term Sustainability of Research Infrastructures on 22 and 23 March in Sofia, and others with the Food 2030 Conference on the role of research and innovation for the future of food, healthy diets and the use of future food resources with the participation of countries from all around the world on 14 and 15 June in the city of Plovdiv.

Thank you for your attention!