

DIRECTOR MARIA-CRISTINA RUSSO
Director "International Cooperation"
Directorate General for Research & Innovation, European Commission
(Speaking points)
OPENING OF HORIZON 2020 SEMINAR

- Dear Dr Hamze, Your Excellency Ambassador Lassen, esteemed guests and colleagues,
- It is a pleasure for me to address this distinguished audience and open this important event, which aims to present the new opportunities stemming from the recently adopted Work Programme for the last phase of Horizon 2020;
- Horizon 2020, the EU's research and innovation Framework programme, is the biggest multilateral research programme of the world and is fully open to the participation of researchers and research organisations from outside Europe.
- We need to solve the common challenges that our societies face, from climate change and environmental protection, to renewable energy, reliable food production and combating diseases and we can do it only by working together!
- Our investment in Science, Technology and Innovation policies is essential for fostering sustainable development and growth for our citizens.
- The Horizon 2020 programme is based on a clear international cooperation strategy which aims at strengthening cooperation with key partners at international level, in key sectors;
- For us, Lebanon is a key partner both at bilateral level and at regional level, within the context of our Neighbourhood policy which is based on increased ownership and cooperation on key sectorial areas, such as research and innovation;
- Indeed, through cooperation in research and innovation, we can not only deepen our scientific knowledge, but also build concrete blocks within our global political relations;
- That is why the presence of our Ambassador is very important here and I would like to give a special thanks to Christina Lassen for all the efforts she did in order to support our scientific cooperation with Lebanon and, in particular, the agreement on the participation of Lebanon to the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area, PRIMA;
- Of course, when thanking people, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Mouin Hamze for the extraordinary work and his personal engagement for enhancing the

EU-Lebanon scientific cooperation both at bilateral and regional level, notably within the PRIMA initiative. I sincerely believe that without all his efforts and the support of his team, we would not be here together to celebrate the important achievement regarding PRIMA and also the important participation of Lebanese researchers to Horizon 2020;

- So far, Lebanese researchers and scientists are already involved in Horizon 2020 with 14 participations in 13 projects in areas such as food, environment and industrial technologies. Thirty-two researchers of Lebanese nationality have also benefited from the research mobility grants, the Marie Curie Actions;
- But there is much more we can do together and this is why we are here today!
- As a matter of fact, as you might know and will be explained later on, Horizon 2020 is implemented through multiannual Work Programmes; at the end of last year we have launched the Work Programme that covers the last phase of Horizon 2020. One of the most important features of that WP is the increase of activities specifically dedicated to International Cooperation;
- Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2018-2020 includes around 30 international cooperation flagships which should mobilise over 1 billion of Euros;
- These opportunities will be presented in detail later. What I want to highlight, from a political point of view, is that your region - the Middle East region - occupies a special place in this context. Just as Europe, it is very diverse in terms of culture, religion, ethnicity, history and governance traditions. It is one of the most complex regions in the world but at the same time it offers a rare opportunity as diversity is perhaps the greatest asset any region can boast;
- We believe that large scale research, science and innovation projects in the region can foster scientific and technological excellence in the region, prevent or reverse the brain drain, by enabling world-class scientific research in subjects ranging from biology, archaeology and medical sciences through basic properties of materials science, physics, chemistry, and life sciences. Such projects create a motivating scientific environment that encourages the region's best scientists and technologists to stay in the region or to return if they have moved elsewhere. It enhances stability and peace.
- We also should not forget that, the region's contribution to world science has been significant throughout history and has resulted in a number of major scientific

breakthroughs and technological inventions without which today's life would be unthinkable. These achievements have had a great influence on European/Western medicine, physics and other life and natural sciences as even in the past there was a lot of interaction between the European and Middle Eastern scientists.

- To this aim in the new Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2018-2020 there are a number of international cooperation topics - dedicated to collaboration between the EU and Middle East, in areas such as cultural heritage, migration and radicalization. Over €200 million will be available for research related to migration, including its root causes. In addition, for the first time we will be launching also a EUR 5 million Horizon 2020 Prize on "Affordable high-tech for humanitarian aid", aimed at supporting frugal innovation in the area of humanitarian aid and disaster response.
- I hope that our event today will encourage more researchers and innovators in Lebanon to engage with their counterparts in Europe and to significantly strengthen our cooperation in the coming years.
- I would like to conclude by highlighting that science is and must remain 'Open to the World' as a matter of necessity (it cannot be otherwise in a globalised world), as a matter of quality (we need access to the best knowledge worldwide), as a contribution to progress (investing in research makes sense in human, social and economic terms);
- The European Commission will continue to develop EU science diplomacy at every opportunity, engaging with new countries and ensuring that science in Europe contributes as much to peace as it does to prosperity and that researchers keep being financed to help contribute to tomorrow's challenges.
- I wish you a very fruitful information seminar. Thanks for your attention!