

Opening Address

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on the occasion of the
5th BMBF Forum for Sustainability:
Research for Sustainability – Driver for Innovation

23 September 2008
Berlin

– Check against Delivery –

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a difficult task to deliver a speech following such good speakers. So I am going to be very pragmatic. I am going to say straight away that Romania is and will be a reliable partner for innovations and it will do its best to drag sciences down to the earth as quickly as possible. I am going to speak about three topics which I find very important for innovations.

The first one is people. We are doing more and more for the freedom for researchers. We are doing more and more for allowing researchers to travel and we are talking more and more about guest researching in our universities, in our institutions; and that is extraordinary. What we are not doing, at least not in my country – and I need some assistance in that field, not physically but at least mentally –, is attracting youngsters to research. What we are not doing, at least not in my country, is offering the youngsters more attractive opportunities.

We do have a beautiful natural sciences museum. We do have a beautiful geological museum. We have a terrible technical museum and they feel guilty for not being able in the last four years to improve the situation of the technical museum. I have seen extraordinary initiatives throughout Europe. The *scienza viva* in Portugal is one of the most extraordinary things I have ever seen. And I wish that we will do something about it, for the young generation is the guardian of science. If we do well now, the young generation is the one who uses new things. I would not buy an iPod; my kid would buy one immediately. I have an old phone, already wireless, and it is the type of modern things which bother us. My kid, however, has the most modern one. Of course, my kid is not a kid anymore; he is an architect now. But anyway, he is the driver for innovation, they are the drivers for innovation; and if you are not looking at them, then you are losing the pace.

The second topic I will refer to is cooperation. I will give you an example. Cooperation is something we are all talking about. Last week in Romania we had a meeting of the Romanian scientific diaspora. We do have an extraordinary scientific diaspora – I think there are 600 registered participants – and they gathered together at the conference. It was organised in an unusual way: throughout two days there were 21 workshops and on the last day we had a general conference. It was an extraordinary achievement,

because for the first time Romania was not complaining about the brain drain. Romania was not talking about bringing back the scientists. For the first time Romania started to talk about cooperations and having partnerships with the Romanians abroad, with the scientists abroad. That was a discussion about brain circulation, more than a discussion about brain drain. And that, I think, was the key achievement of that conference. We were talking about stronger ties, we were talking about partnerships, we were talking about how to successfully apply together for different funds. And I think that the simple measures are the best.

One of the simple measures announced during the conference is a measure we have developed together with our German partners. And it is in my view very simple and very pragmatic. For example, a German research group forms an alliance with a Romanian group and they set up a joint proposal for German funds – it does not matter what kind of funds as long as they are research development and innovation funds – and if they win, Romania is co-financing. It is financing the Romanian group without any other evaluations, questions or other bureaucratic things. And that is an extraordinary improvement on our side; we are very, very bureaucratic, I can assure you. And this model, which we started with our German partners, is a model which we offered to the whole Romanian Diaspora. Everybody was excited about it because that is a clear and simple possibility to work. It is true that from my point of view, as an administrator of funds, the evaluation in Germany, France, England, the United States or in any other country can be taken as a guarantee for the work being high-class work. And the Romanian groups will be part of excellent teams which is something we are looking forward to, all of us.

And the last topic I want to talk about is infrastructure. We are discussing infrastructures at the European level, even the world wide infrastructures. We are discussing infrastructures on the national levels, and we in Romania have finished our first version; that is V 1.0 like in old software. It is the first version of the national roadmap for infrastructure. So we have ESFRI, the European roadmap for infrastructure and we have national roadmaps. Several countries are working on national roadmaps and they find themselves on different levels of the process; some have already completed their work, some have not yet but probably will do so in the near future. What is left to be sorted out are regional infrastructures and what we could call satellite infrastructures. But at least we are discussing them and that is a good start.

However, what we have not discussed so far is the governance of international infrastructures. If you look at any of the German infrastructures which are international, which are European, the main problem is governance. The main problem is that we sit at a round table, we are willing to contribute a certain amount of money, and then we maybe will contribute the money tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, because the government has changed or something else has changed or our fiscal legislation does not allow us to contribute a certain amount or things like that. And these are the real barricades. It is not the infrastructure itself which is the real barrier. Romania is involved in nine of the ESFRI infrastructures and it is competing with three other countries for ELI, for Extreme Light Infrastructure. I hope we will win, but it will not solve the problem of governance. And I think that if we want to have good cooperation, if we want to have our researchers using extensively and efficiently our huge amount of money invested in infrastructures, we will have to do something about governance. We will have to do something to change some important things about governance.

Also talking about infrastructures, I definitely want to say that if we are looking at Europe and we draw a line, a vertical line, on the right hand side we have zero, on the left hand side we have everything. Do you think that is okay? I do not think so. I think that we need a balanced distribution all over Europe, because if we want our kids to understand that science is important and to approach sciences, we have to offer them something; and not only museums, not only textbooks, coloured textbooks, but we have to show them that science is a job for their fathers, for their mothers or for their relatives. And that can only be done with appropriate infrastructures. I think that I could say at the end: Dankeschön und ich wünsche Ihnen eine sehr gute Konferenz.