

Dr. Janez POTOČNIK

European Commissioner for Science and Research

*Video Message**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today I am with you as a virtual Commissioner for Research. Joking aside, I'm sorry that I will not be able to be with you today in person, especially since I see that you have put together an impressive programme.

First I should say that I welcome the role research funding and research performing academies, as well as academies as learned societies, play in helping to establish a European Research Area. They are valued contributors to the changing and dynamic landscape we work in.

And specifically I appreciate your efforts to increase the links and collaboration between academies across Europe and its neighbouring countries, in particular. Scientific cooperation is at the heart of progress and contributes to the deepening of the understanding between peoples – even to the healing of history's wounds.

Two of our era initiatives planned for this year: Joint Programming and International Cooperation, as well as the Capacities Programme of the Seventh Framework Programme are relevant to today.

Our societies face common problems – climate change, energy supply, food quality and supply are only three examples. They also share a common solution: research. But the way research is currently organised, programmed and financed at national level will not be enough to make a real difference. We need a common European response to these grand challenges. This is what

* Video message for the conference „Role of National Academies in the 21st Century”, recorded in Brussels, 29 September 2008, 15^h30-16^h00.

Joint Programming is all about: putting Member States in the driving seat of a process which brings them together to make real progress on the basis of a vision and of a shared, strategic research agenda.

But what might national academies role be in Joint Programming? You are a diverse crowd, but you could be united in helping your government to see where Joint Programming could work best. It's not only about EU Member States either – others are welcome to join your efforts. I would like to call on you to contribute to the establishment of our plans for the future of research and the translation of this into a strategic research agenda. In turn, this would feed into our wider work in taking the ERA forward through the „Ljubljana Process” and in the next months through the French Presidency's „Vision 2020”.

At the level of international cooperation, academies also have an important role to play in the integration of the Balkan countries into the ERA. We have already encouraged their formal association with FP 7 – and soon Bosnia and Herzegovina will join the fold. I count on you bringing your scientific expertise to help increase scientific knowledge and research capacity both in Europe as a whole, and the Balkans specifically. We also need to attract young people into science, ensure researcher mobility and modernise our research infrastructure – you can help here in the areas you know best.

I mentioned a second initiative where national academies might play a pivotal role: in the Capacities Programme under FP 7. Here, a regional dimension has been developed through two activities: „research potential”, aimed at unlocking (through the ERA) the potential of groups in the convergence and outermost regions; and „regions of knowledge” which focuses on increasing the capacity of regional players to enhance economic development for all European regions through science and technology. I strongly encourage you to participate in these activities, particularly those already involved with the regional Inter-Academy Council in South-East Europe which helps to coordinate research in the region.

As strongholds of knowledge and the generator of new ideas your role in stimulating regional sustainable growth deserves our further support – your role in the creation of the ERA and our desire to meet societies grand challenges head-on is a crucial one.

I still remember my recent visit to Budva and Podgorica – hospitality and warmth of your hosts. Lucky you!

I wish you a successful conference.