

# Towards FP9. The key role of frontier research for a more competitive and innovative Europe

Polo Congressuale "Le Benedettine", Piazza S. Paolo a Ripa D'Arno, 16 – Pisa  
6 April 2018

## **Towards FP9. An international conference at the University of Pisa on the future of research and innovation in the EU.**

The international conference Towards FP9. The key role of frontier research for a more competitive and innovative Europe, organised by the University of Pisa in partnership with Science|Business on Friday 6 April was very successful, with around 200 registered attendees.

The event brought together key European and national policymakers, researchers, the innovation and the industry community, to debate on the objectives of the new EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP9) for the years 2021-2027. The role of frontier research, its funding schemes and the relationship with innovative research in the post-Horizon 2020 programme were core discussion as highly pressing topics within academic communities in the EU Member States. The event, moderated by Maryline Fiaschi, Managing Director of Science|Business, combined the speakers' distinguished expertise in different research areas and the informed contributions of key actors from EU, national and regional institutions to present the state of play in the debate on the new Framework Programme.

Professor Paolo Mancarella, Rector of the University of Pisa, opened the conference emphasising the importance of curiosity-driven research and highlighting the role of Tuscany as a unique crossroads in Italy for its expertise in the Research and Innovation sector. The increasing number of EU research grants obtained by the University of Pisa, for instance the prestigious European Research Council (ERC) grants, has recently confirmed this aptitude.

Words of praise to this initiative came from the ERC President Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon who sent his greetings through a video message, encouraging national and European investment in excellent research, regarding both funding and researchers' talent.

The lecture of Professor Mark Bishop, Director of the Centre for Intelligent Data Analytics at Goldsmiths, at the University of London, led the conference to the heart of the matter. Through a very interactive presentation, he illustrated his experience of frontier research on Artificial Intelligence and Big Data, also acknowledging socio-ethical risks of using AI in terms of privacy, unintended bias and algorithm opacity.

The Vice Rector for EU and International research of the University of Pisa, Professor Lisandro Benedetti-Cecchi, made a strong point in favour of the support to frontier research, by expressing his belief that innovation passes through fundamental research, as the creation of knowledge is essential to educate, to increase freedom of choice and opportunities.

Renzo Tomellini (Head of Unit on H2020 policy - DG Research and Innovation at the European Commission) and Fabio Donato (R&I Adviser to the Italian Permanent Representation to the EU) provided their informed viewpoint on the latest political and institutional developments around the next Framework Programme for R&I. After the presentation of the project on the general EU budget for 2021-2027 at the beginning of May, the legislative proposal on the new Framework Programme for R&I (FP9) will identify the allocation of this budget on the Research and Innovation section, together with the assessment of the Programme expected impact, presumably by June 8. Both speakers agreed that the Commission proposal is likely to be consistent

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with the position expressed by the European Parliament on the R&I programme, including the assigned resources, set by the EP to 120 MEUR.

At a regional level, Monica Barni - Regione Toscana Vice President - presented "Toscana Open Research" the open-data observatory on research and its Liaison Office with the EU for research and innovation as two important strategic developments intending to strengthen the R&I Tuscany System.

Leonard Prins, Professor of Organic Chemistry at the University of Padova, presented to the audience the perspective of EU grant recipients. He shared his successful experience as grantee of prestigious EU research grants, including ERC, and stressed the need for society to invest time in fundamental research the same way parents invest it in telling their kids stories with no immediate impact, but with the potential to turn them into responsible adults. Bernd Stowasser, Head of European Public-Private Partnerships at SANOFI Germany, meaningfully expressed the point of view of the European industry on the relationship between fundamental and innovative research. Marco Falzetti, Director of the Agency for the promotion of EU research APRE, contributed to the debate with his knowledgeable perspective on the Italian research and innovation scene. At the end of the Conference speakers were asked to propose some recommendations for the future FP9, included in the recordings of the conference together with the whole debate of the day.