

Volume 5 / Issue 1 / 2010 - EU News

Commissioner Promises "Action and Delivery" for Research, Innovation and Science

The European Commissioner designate for Research, Innovation and Science, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, pledged to move research, innovation and science "to the heart of European policy" in a hearing at the European Parliament. Speaking to the European Parliament's committees on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and Culture and Education (CULT), the new Commissioner designate said that the European Union must become an Innovation Union. "Knowledge, research and scientific excellence is a cornerstone of innovation", she stated. "In the new economy, refined knowledge will replace crude oil as the economy's prime motive force".

During a confident performance, Mrs Geoghegan-Quinn said that if approved as Commissioner, her policies would focus on three main areas: completing the creation of the European Research Area (ERA), addressing societies' grand challenges, and creating an innovation research culture. In her opening speech, she also highlighted the importance of bringing more small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) into the EU's research programmes, and leveraging additional EU funds, such as the Structural Funds, for research. After the speech, the floor was thrown open to questions from the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and during her grilling, Mrs Geoghegan-Quinn gave an idea of the kind of Commissioner she would be.

Asked whether she would be a Research Commissioner who comes up with the big idea or one who improves the instruments we have available, she replied forcefully: "I'm a politician, not a civil servant. I'm going to use the instruments that are already there to ensure that we deliver research to where it is needed". Describing herself as "a doer", she continued, "I will be robust in pushing this forward". She concluded by expressing her desire for 'action and delivery'. Responding to a question on how she would obtain a large block of funding for research during the next round of EU budget negotiations, she said, "I'm up for the challenge. I've done it before in government. I will fight to get as much as I can." In reply to a query on how she would attract more people to science. We should make science sexy. Do we have celebrity scientists? We should have".

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Published on : Mon, 5 Apr 2010