

Dear 

Dear ASD Board Members,

Thank you for inviting me to your Board meeting. It is a real pleasure to be here with you this morning.

As you know, from the Digital portfolio I am now “*landing*” at the Research, Innovation, Culture, Education and Youth portfolio within the Commission. It is a fascinating and challenging endeavour. I am ready to devote all my energy to creating tangible benefits for European citizens and businesses.

We are very proud of the European Aeronautics, Space and Defence industries. You have thrived and innovated to become global players in a hugely competitive sector. Research and innovation have been crucial factors in achieving this current prominence.

In this new phase, I would like to continue counting on your support in order to achieve our policy ambitions.

Aeronautics, Space and Defence are at the crossroads in the priorities of this Commission, with sustainability and security at their heart.

[Green Deal & Aviation]

President Ursula von der Leyen is proposing a “European Green Deal” which will be the key headline ambition of this Commission. It will cover a wide range of policies, among which clean aviation.

Our ambition is very high: to become the world’s first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

By 2030 we plan to reduce overall emissions by at least 50%, or even 55%.

But, let me assure you, the plan will be based on social, economic and environmental impact assessments that provide a level playing field and stimulate innovation, competitiveness and jobs.

We have huge challenges ahead of us for climate-neutral aviation. Research and innovation are again vital towards achieving this objective.

The aviation industry must fully contribute to the achievement of the Paris Agreement objectives, and in reaching the goal of climate neutrality by 2050.

We need a series of impactful measures: including enhanced aircraft and airspace efficiency, increased use of sustainable aviation fuels and market-based measures.

Public pressure on the sector to neutralise climate impact will continue to rise fast.

Failing to deliver the new technologies and improved aircraft in time on the market, will have a negative effect on the aviation industry and European competitiveness in the sector.

For aviation, we should regard this climate challenge more as an opportunity than a threat. Decarbonising air transport is an exceptional opportunity for European industries to lead this transition globally. ASD has a key role to play here.

All in all, at least 35% of the Horizon Europe budget will be mainstreamed for climate-related activities, including potential public private partnerships and collaborative research.

[Research & Innovation incl. Partnerships]

Europe maintains a leadership role in global innovation. At the same time, many competitors are investing faster than us, and they are thinking big.

Nobody can rest on their laurels. We need to bolster both public and private spending if we are to stay ahead of the game.

I ask industry for committing to Horizon Europe and its potential public private partnerships. I ask for bold steps and investing and working with us.

You all know what it takes to invest together in partnerships like these, even with some of your biggest competitors. You have realised that, in this tough global environment, it is sometimes better to work together with a competitor than not to work at all.

By working together, we will be able to deliver more research and innovation and produce better results - we will have the joint capacity to focus on priorities, notably the Green Deal and digitalisation initiatives, that will underpin growth and jobs in key sectors of the economy;

And we will certainly be able to multiply the investment effect.

With the existing partnerships in Horizon 2020, we are making some progress, but, of course, we cannot settle for what we have achieved so far; we cannot stand still.

We need to make much more progress in terms of real and relevant impact in the market and on citizen's lives.

This is why we need to make these partnerships even better, more impactful, flexible, cross-cutting and open to engage other key actors.

This will ensure that these partnerships remain inclusive, open to anyone in Europe on the basis of open competitive calls, to ensure we make the most of our collective brain power.

This will allow these partnerships to build on cross-cutting approaches, from climate, energy and digital solutions to land, naval transport, aviation and space.

This should also aim not only at developing solutions but also at deploying them, aligning and leveraging all the investment programmes available.

For instance, greener aviation development means not only new aircraft but also the ground infrastructure to enable new fuels and electrification at airports. For this, the Connecting Europe Facility programme can be instrumental.

Aerospace and defence were the driver of many new technologies and solutions, then applied to other sectors. Examples are light composite structures or computer-aided design solutions such as Dassault's CATIA.

Today aerospace and defence can benefit by adopting greener and digital solutions spearheaded in other sectors, while adapting them to ensure efficiency, safety and security. Examples are hybrid-electric propulsion, quantum computing, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

Horizon Europe offers a broad spectrum of technologies and instruments to cross-fertilise innovation. This includes collaborative research, the European Innovation Council (especially suited for SMEs) and, of course, potential public-private partnerships.

[Partnerships preparation]

The preparation of new institutionalised partnerships is a political process that is led and coordinated by the respective Commission services.

As a result, it is the responsibility of the Commission to bring together and negotiate with current and potential future private and public partners;

The financial contribution from industrial partners is an issue to be discussed with the Commission, not with existing Joint Undertakings. The latter must focus above all on implementing its last years under Horizon 2020 and on showing the real impact of their activities so far.

Evidently, support and mobilisation from your side in favour of a sufficiently large budget - especially from finance ministers and heads of government - is very welcome. It will be crucial as we negotiate the next EU multiannual financial framework of the EU and on the budget envelopes for programmes such as Horizon Europe.

This is particularly relevant for the Pillar II of Horizon Europe (Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness). This is the pillar addressing sectors such as aviation, naval, land transport, energy, digital, industrial technologies and space.

As you know, EU Member States propose that the majority of the budget in Pillar II of Horizon Europe shall be allocated to actions outside of European partnerships.

This budgetary capping on Horizon Europe-supported Partnerships has several consequences.

Firstly, we need to secure the overall budget envelope for Horizon Europe, in order to secure the envelope for Partnerships.

Secondly, to focus the Partnerships where impact is higher and in line with EU political priorities - including on sustainability.

Thirdly, to exploit synergies between partnerships, both in terms of complementary content and common services.

Fourthly, to be proactive also in other parts of Horizon Europe, such as collaborative research, and also in other EU investment programmes to exploit synergies.

This includes an open, flexible and collaborative approach to integrate promising SMEs and start-ups at due time into the partnerships.

Some of these new disruptive companies may be incubated through the European Innovation Council and the wider ecosystem that the EU is putting in place - to give Europe's many entrepreneurs every opportunity to become leading companies.

[Synergies to seek - examples]

We all need to break our traditional silo approach and seek synergies and new applications. We should ask ourselves “what can we do with other programmes, with other actors, to tackle emerging needs?”

Let me illustrate one example of potential synergies we are exploring to boost, serving both citizens’ security and Green Deal with aerospace, research and innovation.

More and more EU citizens suffer directly from forests wildfires. Not only in southern Europe. In 2018 fires killed hundreds and ravaged forests from Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece ... up to United Kingdom and Sweden – not to mention the massive disasters in other parts of the world.

This is an increasing security concern. This is also consequence of climate change. And not only consequence, also double contributor to climate change. Massive are the direct emissions from these fires to the atmosphere. And massive are the tons of CO₂ no longer captured by the forests burnt.

Some experts say wildfires can account for up to 20% of total global greenhouse gas emissions – well above the emissions from commercial aviation, about which we are talking so much.

However surprising may it seem, the aerial means used to extinguish fires are very old. For instance, when the night comes, firefighting planes stop operating due to pilot safety. And the wildfires go on.

Better aerial means can make a difference. More capable firefighting planes, helicopters and drones. To prevent, detect and extinguish wildfires in all conditions. To ensure safer operations and even evacuation.

Climate change is an enemy to combat with all means. This is also a fight worth fighting. Cutting-edge solutions from aerospace and defence can be brought to bear.

Citizens will then acquire a better appreciation of the industry.

This is just one of the many synergies we can exploit together, with support from EU programmes including research and innovation.

[Skills]

Given my previous and current portfolio as Commissioner, you can count on me to merge digital and physical innovations, and to bridge education, skills and innovation, also in your sectors.

I am well aware of the skills challenge - to create and retain talent.

To encourage more students into science, technology, engineering and maths.

To update the content of the university studies and vocational training with the new industry needs, for instance in terms of digitalisation and electrification.

To inspire students and give them the chance for a career in your sectors, wherever in Europe, whatever their gender and whatever their background.

[Closing]

The recent European elections showed that European citizens expect us to do more to meet their needs.

Europe must take the lead in the transition towards a clean planet.

Europe must remain a responsible global leader with all means to act in defence of its citizens.

That means European institutions and Member States mobilising all their efforts and means to support growth and innovation, particularly through public private partnerships, and by getting our people together.

We can only achieve our ambitious goals with a strong economy. That is why we will invest huge sums in cutting-edge research and innovation with those willing to make a real impact for Europe.

The challenges for the aeronautics, space and defence sector in the coming years will be massive. You can count on my support for making innovation and investment in aerospace and defence a political priority.

My services and myself remain at your disposal to discuss and deliver together tangible results for Europe.