

**Keynote video message by Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn to the EU Conference on Endocrine Disruptors
(European Commission, Charlemagne Building,
11 June 2012, 10:30-10:40)**

Ladies and Gentleman,

While I cannot be with you in person today, I am delighted to have the opportunity to say a few words on the occasion of this EU conference on Endocrine Disruptors.

As you have seen from the agenda, the conference will address both the policy and research aspects of endocrine disruptors. As the Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, I would like to stress vital role played by research in this field.

Policies aimed at protecting human health and the environment from endocrine disruptors must be based on sound science, incorporating scientific findings produced by the research community and translating those findings into action.

During this session dedicated to the current state of science on endocrine disruptors, you will hear from several eminent scientists about the effects of endocrine disruptors on human health and wildlife, as well as their sources, the risks they represent and how they are perceived.

In response to early scientific findings on the possible hazardous effects of endocrine disruptors on wildlife, and public concern surrounding the issue, the European Strategy for Endocrine Disruptors was adopted in 1999.

Since then, European research efforts in this area have intensified. A set of research projects was launched to try to identify and explore the chemicals responsible for affecting human health and wildlife. 54 multi-national collaborative projects have been funded since the adoption of the Strategy, receiving over 120 million Euro from the European Union.

DG Research and Innovation has been and still is at the forefront of funding research on endocrine disruptors. It is not possible for me to cite all the project results but I will mention a few which are of particular relevance here.

Under the Fifth Framework Programme, the cluster of projects on Research into Endocrine Disruption in Europe, CREDO, brought together for the first time a large number of European scientists working both on the human health effects and wildlife impacts of endocrine disruptors, thus increasing our understanding of the many different aspects of this scientific challenge.

A Network of Excellence, CASCADE, funded under the Sixth Framework Programme, made the issue very visible thanks to various outreach and training activities. Finally, under the current Seventh Framework Programme, the NECTAR cluster of projects is exploring the potential role and mechanisms of endocrine disruptors behind the worrying figures which show that fertility rates for men in many European countries are declining.

Scientists working on projects funded by the EU are also investigating how environmental chemicals can affect female fertility. This includes precocious puberty, another emerging trend, where endocrine disruptors could play a role. Furthermore, environmental chemicals and their role in the current obesity 'epidemic' are under investigation.

In order to continue supporting the ongoing research efforts of scientists and policy development on this topic and others, the European Commission has put forward its proposal for the next EU funding programme for Research and Innovation for the period 2014 to 2020. Horizon 2020, as it is called, has been designed to boost sustainable growth, create new jobs and address major societal challenges considered beyond the scope and resources of any single EU country to tackle alone.

Horizon 2020 will, for the first time, bring together under one single framework all research and innovation funding at the European level. This means that it will be easier to deploy research from laboratory to market, reinforcing the innovation chain, and this will also bring benefits to research on endocrine disruptors.

For example, the development of new diagnostic tools to improve the assessment of potential risks posed by environmental contaminants is a challenging but promising area of development.

Horizon 2020 will support a broad range of coordinated activities to address "Societal challenges" – among them the challenge *"Health, demographic change and well-being"* with a proposed budget of around

8 billion Euro. Within this challenge we will continue to support research which explores the impact of environmental contaminants on health.

The decision on how to address endocrine disruptors must be based on conclusions drawn from discussions with stakeholders, but we must also ensure that any future EU policy is built on solid science.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that the topics covered during this conference will offer us much food for thought that we can subsequently turn into positive actions.

I wish you all an excellent conference and I look forward to hearing about the outcome of your discussions.