



Welcome speech

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*EU Agencies Forum
6 December, 2016*

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the EU Agencies Network, I would like to welcome everyone to this Forum and thank the European Parliament for hosting the event, which is the first of its kind.

We are particularly grateful to the keynote speakers – Vice-President McGuinness, on behalf of the European Parliament; Vice-President Georgieva; the Deputy Permanent Representative of Hungary, His Excellency Tibor Stelbaczky; and Sandra Lagumina, Executive Vice President of the ENGIE Group.

We are also very happy to see a wide range of stakeholders represented today, not only from the European Institutions but also from industry and, of course, from citizens. This is a time of significant change for the EU, when it is very important that there is a common understanding of how the institutions and Agencies fit together.

Six months ago, in his State of the Union address, President Juncker described the current situation as, at least in part, an “*existential crisis*” that was challenging the EU project. The Agencies are very much part of that project but as Jean- Paul Sartre commented, “*Il n’y a de réalité que dans l’action...*” The Agencies and Joint Undertakings help deliver the action on the ground that makes the EU project real for citizens and industry.

This Forum is part of our attempt to make the contribution of the Agencies better known, and to seek common ground on the best way for the “EU family” to face up to the current challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today the 45 Agencies and Joint Undertakings play an essential role at the heart of the EU. Agencies cover every aspect of the EU policy spectrum and are involved in delivering all of the European Commission's political priorities. We are present in 35 cities, in 24 Member States and are the familiar face of the EU to many citizens and businesses, delivering services on the ground.

The overall number of statutory staff in Agencies is around 6,500. This, of course, forms only a relatively small proportion of the overall EU effort, but is certainly not negligible and has a disproportionately large impact in the areas where they are based.

But in spite of all this we are largely unknown even at the EU institutional level. To address this, and the challenge of delivering a more efficient and effective EU public service, the Agencies and joint undertakings joined together within the EU Agencies Network. Our role is to help provide an accessible interface between the Agencies on the one hand, and the institutions, businesses and citizens.

We want to put the Agencies' contribution in perspective and put our case forward, but we also want to listen. This Forum is one of the steps we are taking to improve outward communication.

Over the following day and a half we are inviting you to look at our actions and judge us based on our contribution and achievements. While the members of the Network are proud of the role of Agencies within the EU public service, we realise there is a need to communicate better, and continue to evolve and improve. Consequently, we are committed to proactively looking for synergies through shared services and capabilities, and mutual value creation with the EU Institutions. We want you to take an objective look at what we are doing and, once you have weighted all the facts, tell us whether or not we add value.

Please also tell us how we could make an even bigger contribution! Since in a day and a half we can't look at everything, we have prioritised the discussion in the panel sessions on four current areas from the EU political priorities that are receiving a lot of attention – jobs, growth and investment; citizens; justice and home affairs; and innovation.

We will be carrying out these discussions against the background of two studies, one prepared by the European Parliament and the other by the EU Agencies Network. The panel discussions broadly reflect the priorities identified in the study carried out by the EU Agencies Network, which looks at how the Agencies support the Europe 2020 strategy and the Juncker Agenda. This study is therefore focused on the effectiveness of the Agencies in delivering action on the ground. The Parliament

study, on the other hand, looks at costs Member States would incur if agencies did not exist. As you will hear, based on a snapshot of seven Agencies, the Parliament concludes that the overall cost to the taxpayer of delivering services has been reduced as a result of the employment of Agencies. Put simply, this study shows that it is cheaper to do a task once at EU level than to replicate it 28 times at national level. These studies, together, examine issues that are absolutely fundamental to the current “existential” debate facing the EU – the cost and the effectiveness of service provided at the EU level, in this case focusing on the role of the Agencies.

In the discussion on the EU budget, Vice President Georgieva has quite rightly stressed the need for the EU to be more agile. It is no longer enough to do something well – we must do the right things at that right time and produce tangible results and added value. To quote the Vice President, “we can build a road with a 0% error rate but if it goes nowhere, it is still a road to nowhere.” The Agencies are ready to move with the times and make sure that we are on the right road, travelling in the right direction. However, any discussion and evolution should take into account the existing contribution of the Agencies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In many respects the Agencies already act as the EU’s fast reaction force. Whenever there is a problem, we are the first in line to offer solutions.

If we look at the newspaper and television reports, or check the Internet news feeds and social media, we will see the issues of migration and security dominating, not only the headlines, but also the political and social debate throughout the EU.

Agencies are both active and visible in these areas, and are producing results. For example, did you know that **Frontex**, the European Border and Coastguard Agency, has contributed to the rescue of more than 89,000 people at sea; **eu-LISA**, the agency managing large security systems, has processed 20 million visa applications; that looking at combatting international crime, a total of 98 joint actions were coordinated by **Europol** in 2015 and that these coordinated efforts targeted illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings, drugs and organised property crime. They resulted in nearly 900 arrests, the seizure of nearly 8 tonnes of drugs, 1,400 tons of stolen metal, and 190 tons of counterfeit pesticides.

The issues of immigration and security are vitally important, but the long running financial crisis is another central part of the public debate about Europe.

As President Schulz made clear in his speech marking Business Europe Day last year, the EU is in danger of falling behind in the race to stake a claim to the leading-edge technologies that will help build a prosperous and secure future. The EU 2020 priorities for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth depend for their success on effective action supporting business and innovation.

Once again, the Agencies are first in line to help deliver solutions.

- Did you know that since 2011 the **European Institute for Innovation and Technology** has supported the creation of 32 innovation hubs across Europe? That it has supported innovative 200 start-ups and entrepreneurship;
- Did you know that over the period from 2014-2020 the **Bio-based Industries Joint Undertaking** is administering €3.7bn of investment in bio-based innovation and funding more than 200 cooperative projects through cross-industry services.

And finally, do you know to what extent IPR-intensive industry contribute to the overall EU economy? Well, they contribute to 38% of jobs, 42% of the EU's GDP, and these IPR-intensive industries are responsible for 90% of all the EU external trade.

- Every year the **EUIPO** and the **Community Plant Variety Office** contribute to this by providing accessible and efficient registration systems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The third area contributing to the sense of “existential crisis” that I would like to address, is the failure to connect with citizens. The EU is accused of being too bureaucratic, and too distant from ordinary people. Sometimes the accusation is “too much Europe”. However, as Monique Goyens from the European Consumer Organisation has pointed out, the problem can also be “too little Europe” on the things that matter for citizens such as, emission control, data protection or dangerous chemicals.

Well, you can be sure that Agencies are active in all these areas as well as those linked to health and medical advances.

- Did you know that the **EU drug-monitoring agency** has monitored 560 new psychoactive substances?
- Were you aware that the **Innovative Medicine Initiative** is addressing the challenges holding back the development of new antibiotics? And that this involves a network of 800 hospitals in 36 countries, as well as over 500 laboratories;

- And, on a similar theme, since its establishment in 1995, the **European Medicines Agency** has recommended approximately 1,000 medicines to the European Commission for a marketing authorisation for all EU Member States. Many of these medicines are innovative and include biotechnology products such as cell and gene therapy medicines.

We could go on and on, touching upon all aspects affecting the daily life of EU citizens, such as transport, energy, digital connectivity, education, or food safety but I will stop now since you will get more information in the presentations later.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Agencies' message in this Forum, to citizens and civil society, is that we realise that the EU public sector is facing unparalleled public scrutiny. We are ready to evolve, we are ready to improve, and we are ready to find more efficient ways of delivering a top class public service.

The Agencies know we must work harder to show our impact on the daily lives of citizens and part of that will be to put a greater focus in future years on small and medium-sized companies. We will also strive to be even more accountable and transparent.

Our message to the Institutions is that the Agencies recognise the political and economic realities facing the EU. In fact many of our staff are at the front line in dealing with these realities.

Look at us as an asset that is there to help you bring forward your priorities. Make use of the Agencies Network as a valuable partner and involve us in all processes that may potentially have an impact on us.

We know that the pressure on resources will not go away and hard choices need to be made. Let's be clear, we are not asking anyone to play favourites. We think we have experience to share and we are willing to contribute in the best possible way.

I am convinced that because of our diversities in size and fields of action, our knowledge and pragmatic approach is worth being considered. Already, in the inter-institutional discussions on agency resources we have put forward novel ideas for managing performance, focusing on results. These ideas have great potential and we hope to play an active role in shaping the future. We are partners ready to be included, so trust us, and welcome us to the table.

Let's work together to find the best way forward for our citizens, society and the economy.

Thank you very much.