

**Official National Launch of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration (FP7) (2007-2013)**

**15 February 2007**

**Address by Principal Permanent Secretary**

Good morning Honourable Prime Minister, Deputy Director-General, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

We have just heard the Prime Minister giving an overview of our aspirations and achievements in the field of scientific and technological research at a national level. As the Prime Minister said, research and innovation have been given a prominent position on the government's agenda, and the public sector is gearing up to give a valid contribution in this field. As Principal Permanent Secretary, I would like to take this opportunity to focus on what is happening in the Public Service and within the wider Public Sector.

It is no secret that scientific research within the local public sector is somewhat limited. Nevertheless, there do exist a number of areas where research has been performed for a number of years. The Malta Centre for Fisheries Sciences at San Lucian is one such area, and has been instrumental in setting the framework for the local fish-farming industry. The Plant Biotechnology Centre and the Institute for Agriculture also deserve a mention here. The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) has been especially active on the policy front, and has participated in a number of FP6 projects related to environmental science.

We have recently embarked on a plan with the objective of putting public sector participation and contribution to scientific research on a firmer footing. The National Strategic Plan for Science and Technology identified a number of action points for selected public sector entities. Late in January, I have chaired the first meeting of a forum which was constituted to implement the recommendations of the Strategic Plan.

With effect from 2008, selected entities will ringfence 0.25% of their budget for research and innovation activities. Appropriate cost centres will be established to capture and manage such funds, and ensure that the money is not diverted elsewhere. The identified entities include MITTS, Wasteserv, EneMalta, Water

Services Corporation, the Malta National Laboratories, the Department of Health, the Department of Veterinary Affairs and Fisheries, the Department of Building and Construction, and the Malta Transport Authority.

But funding is only the first step. Far from being an end in itself, investment in research and innovation must deliver results. As ever, utilisation of this money in the best way possible is of paramount importance. The identified departments and entities will be developing their own strategic plans to establish clear research objectives and chart the way forward.

This in turn necessitates development of the required planning and management skills through appropriate training. Plans are in hand to develop a course in technology management with the assistance of a prominent overseas institution.

With respect to the international perspective, I am pleased to be able to report positively on the level of collaboration between local public institutions and the EU's Joint Research Centre. The JRC's mission is to provide scientific and technical support for the development, implementation and monitoring of EU policies, and consists of seven institutes with expertise in a variety of fields including energy, environment, health, security and consumer protection.

A workshop with the JRC was held in Malta last November and, following this, two followup visits by local players to JRC institutes have been organised. There are seventeen JRC networks and projects involving Maltese partners, and over fifty Maltese experts participated in JRC specialised workshops in 2005.

I cannot conclude my address without a brief reference to the Malta Council for Science and Technology, which also falls within my remit and is pivotal to establishing the conditions conducive to research and innovation in Malta. MCST has three primary responsibilities as follows:

- providing policy advice on science, technology, research and innovation to government,
- driving the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation, and
- promoting FP7 in Malta.

The MCST has recently been given fresh impetus and additional funding has been allocated to enable it to strengthen its capacity in order to fulfil these important functions. Following today's launch, MCST will be organising a number of information sessions on the various FP7 programmes and themes to further raise awareness and explain the specifics of each area. These events will be supplemented with one on one meetings with industry and academia to further boost participation.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a fruitful morning.