

**The opening speech of Mr. Mirek Topolánek, Czech Prime Minister, Chair of the Research Council
at the Czech Presidency Conference “Researchers in Europe without Barriers”**

It is an honour for me to have the opportunity of speaking at this conference held in the framework of the Czech Presidency of the EU Council. Free movement of knowledge is rightly considered to be the fifth freedom of the internal market. And I want to believe that its full implementation will not take as long as did the implementation of those four basic freedoms, by which I mean particularly free movement of the workforce and services.

The title of this conference is “Researchers in Europe Without Barriers”. And I think there are only a few other European initiatives where there is such a degree of consensus. We must make profit of this consensus and transform good theory into good practice. For that matter, support for research is a generally recognised anti-crisis measure.

We are now following upon the activities of the European Commission and the French Presidency. The main topical issues we are to address include research careers – particularly for young researchers, increased researcher mobility and elimination of the remaining barriers, development of the European Research Area, and better links between research and the business sector.

In terms of investment in research, the quality of universities and the number of patents and new technologies the European Union lags behind both the USA and Japan. And if nothing changes, we will also lag behind China and India. I am confident that we can reverse this trend. Europe’s chance is not to emulate foreign models. Its chance is to stick to what has brought us success for centuries. We must free ourselves from paternalism, eliminate the remaining barriers and give room to the private initiative of researchers and businesses.

The solution does not lie in new strategies, sophisticated national and EU plans. It is no coincidence that nice visions, for example those set out in the Lisbon strategy, often remain only on paper. It is much clearer in research than in other human activities that what is decisive is *human action*, not *human design*. No-one can predict what new discoveries will be made, what the drivers of future prosperity will be, which ideas will appear or disappear.

It is the future ideas and not past technologies that will guarantee success. And future ideas cannot be predicted by any forecaster, nor can they be arranged for by any planner. If, in the EU as a whole, we need more freedom and less regulation, this is true of research far more than of any other area. The task of state and other authorities is to create conditions for researchers, but then to give them freedom.

This is exactly what the renowned Czech, eminent European and great statesman, Charles IV, had in mind and what is formulated in the Founding Charter of the first university in Central Europe: “Doctors, Masters and Students at any faculty and outside it, all together and each one separately, wherever they may come from.... we want to provide with a special protection under our Charter, giving each a solid guarantee that all privileges and freedoms... enjoyed by Doctors and Students at institutions of learning both in Paris and Bologna, we will kindly grant to all and each one who might wish to come, and we shall see to these freedoms to be inviolably preserved for all and each one.”

I can hardly imagine a more inspirational and genuine text in relation to the challenge that we are facing. Thank you for your attention and I wish every success to your deliberations.