

DG Research and Innovation at the European Commission

Cristina Russo

European Commission

9th of May - the day we celebrate Europe in this institutional speech,

I will not go in details of what "science diplomacy" is, but I would rather speak briefly, as Sandro asked me to do, about the place that science diplomacy has within the European Commission political priorities and the growing importance it has in EU's policies.

Since I have the honour of speaking in front of a former President of the European Commission, I would like first of all, to refer to the priorities of the current European Commission's President, which have been set shortly after he was designated back in summer 2014.

President Juncker has set 10 strategic political priorities on which he is focusing his attention. One of these is making Europe a stronger global actor and here science diplomacy has an important role to play by linking international cooperation with the EU's external policies - from EU's diplomatic relations with strategic partner countries, to challenges in the European Neighbourhood, to those related to development policy, humanitarian aid and crisis management, to trade and international cooperation on global challenges.

When Commissioner Moedas was designated as European Commissioner for Research, Science and innovation he presented his priorities during the hearing in the European Parliament and, in doing so, he clearly said: "in doing all that I want to step up international cooperation and science diplomacy". And those were not only words; he immediately set up actions.

I will not list all the activities undertaken in this context, but I'll mention at least one. We will discuss about SESAME later, it is going to be one of our case studies, so I will not enter into details on what it is and what it represents in terms of science diplomacy.

But just to say that one of the first things that Commissioner Moedas asked me was to finalise the procedure for the EU - which already contributed financially - to become a

formal observer of Sesame, to achieve the Observer status. That was represented as a concrete example of the political importance SESAME has for the EU and it was done in April 2015.

I had the pleasure to go to Jordan with him and visit SESAME for the signing ceremony of the EU's observer statute.

And I will have the pleasure again, next week to participate with him to the SESAME opening session; the operations of Sesame are also, as I said, financially supported by the EU through the Horizon 2020 programme - the biggest multilateral research and innovation programme in the world - completely "open to the world" which support various activities of Science Diplomacy (not only Sesame).

Another important activity is the forthcoming programme Partnership in Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) - a close to EUR 400 joint programme of the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries focusing on food and water. The programme was recently presented at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial conference on research and innovation that took place in Malta on 3 and 4 May this year and the Valetta declaration adopted at the end of the conference.

As I mentioned in the opening of my intervention, science diplomacy has a growing importance within EU policies, including in foreign policy. As a matter of fact, the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy will develop more creative approaches to diplomacy which entails more systematic resources to employ science diplomacy" - an important recognition and building block of the Harnessing Globalization section of the European Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe, adopted in March this year. The aim is to consider what the EU can do to shape globalisation in line with our shared interests and values - in this case science diplomacy is in support of our economic policy.

I would conclude by saying that we are shaping the next research Framework Programme and in the very first preparatory discussions and work that we are doing, international cooperation and science diplomacy have a very important role to play. Initiatives like the one today are certainly highly contributing to this endeavour.

I am confident that we will have a very interesting discussion and thank you for your attention.