

Speaker biography

Robert-Jan Smits is Director-General of DG Research and Innovation (RTD) at the European Commission. In this capacity he is responsible for defining and implementing the European Union policy and programmes in the field of research and innovation (average annual budget 8 billion Euro).



His previous assignment was Deputy Director-General of DG Joint Research Centre (JRC) where he was responsible for Programmes and Stakeholder Relations, Resource Management, and three Institutes, being the Institute for Energy, the Institute for Environment and Sustainability and the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies. Before that Mr. Smits was Director for the European Research Area: Research Programmes and Capacity at DG RTD, where his responsibilities included: coordination of national research programmes, cooperation with intergovernmental research organisations (EIROforum, EUREKA, COST), research infrastructures, the relations with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Structural Funds.

Mr. Smits is chairing several high-level committees such as European Research Area Committee (ERAC) and the Steering Committee of the ERC (ERCEA). Mr. Smits has been instrumental in the development of several policy initiatives in the field of European science and innovation policy such as: the European Research Council (ERC), the European Roadmap for large scale facilities, Public-Private Partnerships in research, HORIZON 2020 and the Innovation Union.

Robert-Jan Smits was born in The Netherlands in 1958. He has degrees from Utrecht University in The Netherlands, Institut de Hautes Études Internationales et du Développement in Switzerland and Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in the United States of America.