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## **EU SHELVES MACRON IDEA FOR 'EUROPEAN DARPA'**

- 26.04.2018

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EU Observer (25 April 2018)

Europe will not have a pan-European innovation agency comparable to the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (Darpa), as proposed by French president Emmanuel Macron last year.

"I think that the approach that we want is a little bit different," said EU commissioner for research and innovation Carlos Moedas, at a press conference in Brussels on Wednesday (25 April).

He presented the European Commission's strategy paper on artificial intelligence (AI), together with three other commissioners.

The legally non-binding document is the first formal commission paper to discuss AI in depth since Macron held his speech at the university of Sorbonne in September 2017, calling for a European agency that dealt with AI.

"I propose that, over the next two years, we create a European agency for disruptive innovation in the same vein as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (Darpa) in the United States during the conquest of space," Macron said there.

Darpa is a US defence agency that had a crucial role in the space race, as well as laying the basis for the internet.

"Such an agency would make Europe an innovator and not a follower," the French president added.

But the commission has decided not to propose a 'European Darpa'.

### **Darpa is too top-down**

Moedas said that the commission shared Macron's concerns on a lack of disruptive innovation happening in Europe.

"You can have innovation that replaces one product for another product, but that doesn't really create jobs. The innovation that creates jobs is the one that is disruptive, that creates an all new market," he said.

"We were not good enough on that in Europe," he noted.

The Portuguese commissioner added that in response the EU has set up a European innovation council, which is there to support startups and give advice on how to scale up innovative ideas.

"The Darpa system in the US is a little bit different from that," said Moedas.

"It is a more top-down approach where you have the ability to tell someone to develop on a certain area, a certain method or new technology. I think that the approach that we want is a little bit different, is more open than that."

He noted that if France or Germany wanted to set up their own agencies, they would "of course" be free to do so.

"To really have a European added value there is where you have to have something that is more open, more bottom up," said Moedas.

A commission official added later, on the condition of anonymity, that it was too early to have a 'horizontal' agency that deals with AI.

Moreover, the source told EUobserver that even when member states publicly call for EU-level agencies, they sometimes show lacklustre support after the commission actually filed a legislative proposal to set them up, because of budget constraints.

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Kaynak/Source: