The first SOLARROK – European Forum of PV Clusters was held during the Open Days 2015 in Brussels. The subject was on The Future of Photovoltaics – how can European Regions Participate in the Growing Market for Solar Energy? The Chairman of FOSS Research Centre for Sustainable Energy, Dr. Venizelos Efthymiou, participated at a round table discussion on PANEL 1. Smarter Use of Solar Electricity – the Regions’ Approach to Grid Integration, Storage & Energy Pooling. The panel discussed opportunities and bottlenecks with experts from leading PV regions and address— among others – the following questions: How to support innovation and address technical challenges such as new grid services, demand response, or aggregation? How to boost PV implementation through demonstration projects and innovative consumer-oriented business models? How could regional interaction lead to homogenized regulations that support the European market development for PV?
Dr. Efthymiou took an active part in the discussions and among others he talked about net-metering in Cyprus and pointed out some issues that need to be taken care of. Specifically, he mentioned: “In other terms, net-metering implementation in Cyprus has reflected the two main important issues: It has to pay what it costs the system and the customer shouldn’t put more energy to the system than he is consuming. The system is used as a storage and it has to be paid. The approach in Cyprus has taken in correctly what is required from a prosumer to be an active part in this new market, and I think that is why it was successful. We should see more actions from regulators, from the Commission, in trying to identify a level playfield for all technologies. At the moment we are being pushed into a market where surcharges and taxes are destroying a level playing field for the technologies. There, the Commission has to take action.”

European PV clusters that include 7 European regions and 9 countries have joined forces to foster the technological and process related innovation in PV. SOLARROK represents this new cooperation format, which is built up by the participating regional PV clusters in Germany, Austria, Spain (Navarra), France (Rhône Alps), Slovenia, Lithuania, and the ELAt region (Dutch-Belgium-German cross border region: Eindhoven, Leuven, Aachen). The project partners have completed a 3-years workplan to strengthen the Photovoltaics (PV) innovation-driven research and industry in Europe. The future of the PV sector has been addressed starting from a regional level to transnational action. Central issue of the project was to develop and integrate a Joint Action Plan (JAP) which was set up based on regional analyses and innovation strategies. By close dialog with all triple helix stakeholders (business, research, and public authorities) the JAP is being implemented as a strategic instrument for the European PV Solar Energy clusters.