

European research area: new perspectives

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In its Conclusions on the Future of Science and Technology in Europe, the Council welcomes the Commission's Green Paper "The European Research Area: New Perspectives" and the debate that it has stimulated as timely inputs for the next cycle of the Lisbon strategy (2008-2010).

Recognising the critical role played by science and technology in the development of knowledge-based economies, the Council that more rapid progress should be made in order to respond to:

- the increased international competition, including for qualified human resources for R&D, and new opportunities brought by the globalisation of economic and knowledge flows;
- the increasing complexity and scale of the economic, social and environmental challenges affecting society;
- the need of business to operate in an environment of 'open innovation' where connections with each other and with public research institutions are at the core of value creation;
- the growing importance of the freedom of knowledge and of knowledge circulation, notably knowledge-sharing between public research and industry, as well as public at large.

1) To ensure sufficient human resources for R&D, the Council calls on the Member States and the Commission to:

- work together in the context of the open method of coordination to improve researchers' careers and promote balanced circulation of researchers with the rest of the world. To this effect, it suggests the development of objectives for the EU as a whole for the next decade in the following areas: 1) balanced brain circulation between the EU and the US; 2) maintain a positive growth rate of new graduates and PhD in S&T and the appropriate flow to the private sector; 3) increase the share of women among new researchers; 4) find an appropriate balance of R&D personnel inflow to the EU from the rest of the world for mutual benefit;
- work together to support national, international and community actions for increasing human resources for science and technology, as well as for boosting the attraction to Europe of highly qualified scientists.

The Commission is invited to:

- consolidate its activities for monitoring the developments in human resources in S&T and to develop a comprehensive set of measurable indicators for the growth, attraction and retention of human resources in science and technology in Europe;
- provide an assessment of still existing key barriers to mobility of researchers within the EU and suggest an overall plan to remove those barriers.

2) To reinforce competitive incentives and market conditions for business research and innovation, the Council invites the Member States Member States to further develop strategies and policies to combine the three pillars of the knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation).

The Commission and the Member States are invited to:

- further increase their efforts to stimulate industry to make full use of the Community funding available for R&D and innovation;
- enhance data and knowledge sharing, in particular the use of data and results from publicly funded research results across Europe;
- continue to study ways to improve conditions for R&D funding, notably building upon the experience gained from the Risk-Sharing Financing Facility (RSFF), as part of the mid-term evaluation of the 7th Framework Programme for RTD.

3) To optimise the use of public resources for R&D programmes, R&D infrastructures and international cooperation, the Council invites the Member States to:

- encourage Research Councils and National Funding Agencies in Member States, as well as intergovernmental European Research Organisations, to expand their collaboration and to devise innovative forms of pooling together their expertise and resources on a mutual voluntary basis for joint objectives;
- encourage public and private research institutions to make full use of the emerging distributed forms of research activity (namely eScience) based upon international research networks;
- develop and strengthen their national roadmaps and strategies on research infrastructures.

The Member States and the Commission are called upon to:

- exchange information on national science and technology policies in Member States, including notably on the reforms of universities and higher education systems, as well as other public research institutions, as well as the level of networking across institutions;
- work more closely together in the area of international cooperation in S&T in order to increase the effectiveness of the existing activities and to increase Europe's contribution to tackling global challenges;
- intensify their dialogue with regard to the modernisation of European universities.