

European research area: activities within the scope of the EC framework programme 2002-2006

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In today's rapidly changing world, science, technological process and economic and social development are closely interrelated. In this "globalised" world, research and development are moving forward at an increasingly rapid rate thanks to the ever freer and faster exchange of scientific results, information and research personnel between countries. Therefore, this Communication is intended to outline the broad economic guidelines for a new policy of international scientific and technological cooperation fulfilling the strategic objectives of opening the European Research Area up to the world. In order to position Europe at the hub of the worldwide knowledge-based society, an ambitious and extensive programme of international scientific and technological cooperation must be developed. To that end, in the interests of all parties concerned: - cooperation must fulfil the Community's scientific, technical and socio-economic objectives and, at the same time; - cooperation must be firmly rooted in the Community's foreign policy and development aid programmes and must fulfil the European Union's overall interests (political and commercial interests, solidarity, etc). The European Research Area has established a new political context in which to develop a new strategy of international scientific and technological cooperation based on the previous achievements of projects undertaken of projects within the European Union. This strategy should focus on following key areas: - making the European Research Area more attractive to the best scientists and making it a world class reference centre; - enabling European researchers and industrialists to access the knowledge and technology produced outside Europe and also the experiment fields needed for European research; - developing scientific and technical activities useful to the implementation of EU foreign policy and development aid; - enlisting the scientific and technological resources of the European union and of third countries in initiatives that provide a response to significant world problems of concern to the Community such as food safety, environmental safety, etc. Finally, a more proactive approach to implementing agreements on scientific and technical cooperation with third countries will make it possible for such agreements to fully develop the part they can play in developing relations with these third countries. A twofold objective should be targeted in the future: - to step up consistency and coordination between international scientific and technological cooperation activities under taken in Europe at every level; - to focus on European Union efforts on specific thematic areas and foreign partners of major importance.