Science and technology: guidelines for future European Union policy to support research

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Following a wide ranging policy debate on the future of EU funded research and the broad debate on the future of EU funded research and the broad contents of the next Framework Programme, formal proposals for which are expected from the Commission in April 2005, a substantial majority of delegations supported the following Presidency conclusions.

The Council emphasized the crucial role of research and technological development policy in the

context of the Lisbon strategy and the importance of the successful realisation of the European Research Area. It acknowledges the important role of national policies in realising the Lisbon goals and welcomes therefore the CREST report on the first cycle of the Open Method of Coordinationconcerning the implementation of the 3% action plan. Moreover, the Council stresses the importance of Member States' commitment to advancing and optimising this process with a view to realising the 3% Barcelona objective, recalling that two thirds of this R&D investment should come from the private sector. It also reaffirms the need to focus and integrate, strengthen and structure research and technological development at a European level as an indispensable complement to national efforts. Lastly, it notes, however, that these conclusions are without prejudice to the ongoing discussions concerning the Financial Perspectives (2007-2013).

In its conclusions, the Council stresses the importance of ensuring that the Framework Programme takes account of certain cross-cutting principles, in particular:

- coherence and synergy between the major lines of action of the programme, in response to the objectives set out in of the Treaty regarding research and technological development, including effective support to Community policies;

- European added-value;

- promotion of excellence of European research;

- facilitation of the participation of all relevant parties, in particular SMEs;

- coherence between national and Community R&D policies, thereby avoiding overlaps and gaps between national and European research efforts;

- simplification, improvement and acceleration of administrative and financial procedures, and

mechanisms for their effective follow-up;

- promotion of technological innovation;

- stimulation of knowledge diffusion;

- monitoring and assessing the performance of the programmes, in particular regarding any new mechanisms.