

Putting knowledge into practice: A broad-based innovation strategy for Europe

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The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the own-initiative report of Mr. Adam **GIEREK** (PES, PL) in response to the Commission's communication entitled 'Putting knowledge into practice: a broad-based innovation strategy for Europe'.

The Committee welcomes the Commission's proposal which seeks to launch a new initiative for lead markets, aimed at facilitating the marketing of new innovative products and services in areas where the EU can become the world leader. It takes the view that the new lead market initiative, which should concentrate particularly on the creation and marketing of new innovative products and services, must be started up particularly in fields where there is a large potential demand, whilst ensuring that the less developed regions are not left behind.

The report stresses the need in particular:

- to revitalise European businesses and their potential to innovate by cutting red tape, thereby improving the quality of regulation whilst reducing the administrative burden;
- to introduce into education programmes activities and initiatives designed to attract young people to science and innovation;
- to take measures at EU, regional and local levels are needed to increase the number of science, engineering and technology graduates, particularly female graduates, also in primary research and notably by using the 'People' Specific Programme within the Seventh Framework Programme;
- to install the technological and scientific infrastructure needed for creating innovative solutions in existing tertiary educational establishments, so as to provide research centres with development prospects;
- to ensure that efforts should be focused on facilitating the transfer of research results into marketable products, particularly for SMEs (while taking care not to stifle fundamental research).

Members agree with the Commission that 'cluster policy' is an important part of Member States' innovation policies. They call on actors, particularly at regional and local levels, to promote clusters, as well as innovation and technology centres, in urban centres and rural areas, in such a way that a balance can be reached between different regions; encourages the Member States to promote, in their countries, the creation of 'knowledge regions' and 'clusters' and EU-wide and cross-border cooperation, and also to promote cooperation with experts from third countries; stresses in this context the importance of creating governance structures so as to improve cooperation between different actors in a cluster and asks for clusters to be directed also to cross-border activities, building notably on the experience of Euroregions, which possess established cross-border structures and social networks.

The Member States are invited to use the Structural Funds for building new and strengthening existing technical infrastructure for innovation development in the form of innovation centres, technical incubators and research-development centres in the regions endowed with sufficient innovative and knowledge potential.

Members, furthermore, stress that if a European Institute of Technology (EIT) were created, it should invest in the relationship between knowledge institutions and businesses through a focus on innovation. In this way, it should help to boost competition in innovation fields; and thus be able to make a significant contribution to translating Europe's potential for innovation into practice

According to the Committee, the present venture capital system does not meet the funding needs of SMEs, micro-businesses and small entrepreneurs. The Member States, therefore, should use public funds, including the Structural Funds, to begin establishing risk capital funds in the form of public-private partnerships in regions and fields having innovative potential and a sound knowledge base. It invites the Member States to consider and implement tax incentives that encourage enterprises to invest more in research, development and innovation.

Convinced that reasonable and reliable copyright protection and patent systems are crucial elements in building an innovative knowledge-based economy and society, Members confirm the need to reform patent policy in Europe, while recognising that is a long-term process. In this respect, they call on 1) the Commission to set up, in cooperation with the Member States, a group of experts, including also economic experts, to review the situation including the question of patentability; 2) the Commission and the EIF to examine the possibilities for providing small businesses with adequate financial support for their patent applications; 3) to present, in cooperation with the Member States, a plan to integrate the European Patent Organisation into the Community; 4) the Commission and the Member States to propose, in the context of the new Community patent, a procedure for eliminating trivial patents and sleeping patents filed for the sole purpose of obstruction; 5) the Commission to draw up, in cooperation with the Member States, measures that are alternative and complementary to patent right legal protection measures which will defend inventors and emerging models of creation against blackmail and law abuse (such as FLOSS (free/libre/open source software licensing systems).

The Commission is invited to encourage the use of reformed networks of EuroInfoCentres and Innovation Relay Centres for providing complex services at regional level for all players involved in the innovation process and to support the role that intermediary organisations representing SMEs play as innovation developers and advisors.

The Member States are invited to introduce into education programmes, activities and initiatives designed to attract young people to science and innovation, as well as to promote national and European prizes for innovation