

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

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The Commission has presented its Annual Report on research and technological development activities of the European Union in 2005.

At the Spring European Council 2005, the heads of State and government reinforced the **Lisbon Strategy** with a new partnership for growth and employment, re-boosting the Barcelona objective of **dedicating 3% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to research in 2010** compared with 1.9% today. In its Communication 'Building the ERA of knowledge for growth' of 6 April 2005 which sets out the European Research policy objectives for 2007-2013, the Commission reiterated how crucial it is to provide new impetus to knowledge for sustainable growth to achieve the Lisbon goals. Major steps towards the Seventh Framework Programmes (FP7) were made in 2005 with the presentation by the Commission of its proposals for the entire legal framework.

Alongside the preparation of the future research funding framework, the Commission enhanced in 2005 major policy initiatives towards the European Research Area (ERA).

- substantial progress has again been made to **reduce mobility obstacles** and to enhance skills and competences for career development across sectors and disciplines. In addition, the enhancement of the researchers' status, profession and career development was boosted in 2005 with the Recommendations to Member States on the European Charter for Researchers and on the Code of Conduct for the recruitment of Researchers, of which the concrete uptake started immediately after its adoption;
- **28 European Technology Platforms** are now in progress. They focus on strategic issues where achieving Europe's future growth, competitiveness and sustainability depends upon major technological advances, ranging from steel to air, rail and maritime transport, hydrogen and photovoltaics, water and chemicals, and from nanoelectronics to innovative medicines, plant genomics or sustainable chemistry (including industrial biotechnology), manufacturing, mutual learning and foresight knowledge;
- **68 ERA-NET** projects were selected; these aim at the coordination of national and regional research programmes in fields such as bilateral cooperation with third countries, metrology, agriculture and fisheries, plant and human health, energy, transport or environment;
- an action plan for 2005-2009 for the implementation of a safe, integrated and responsible European strategy for the development of **Nanosciences and Nanotechnologies** was adopted in June;
- the Commission reported on the successful implementation of the Environmental Technologies Action Plan as well as the Environment and Health Action Plan, which continued in 2005;
- the **10 Year Implementation Plan** for the Global Earth Observation initiative has been adopted at the Brussels Summit organised by the Commission in February 2005.

**Implementation of sixth Framework Programme continues:** in 2005, the budget was fully committed. Efforts were pursued for the FP6 to continue to attract the best research groups and the most innovative companies, organisations and institutions and significant scientific and technological progress was achieved in all thematic priorities. Furthermore, research is being carried out to support policies in areas such as agriculture, fishing, health and consumer protection, education, youth, employment and social policies, justice and home affairs, the environment, the single market, energy and transport. Concerning

the regulatory and administrative environment, further improvement and progress continued where appropriate, notably concerning simplification.

**Progress towards the 3% objective:** the report confirms that all Member States have now set generally quite ambitious R&D expenditure targets either in the context of their NRP or soon after.

Assuming that all the R&D expenditure targets were met, R&D expenditure in the EU would increase significantly to around 2.6% of GDP in 2010. By comparing, both within each Member State and the EU-25 as a whole, the annual rate of growth of the R&D intensity required between 2004 and 2010 to meet the target with the rate of growth experienced over recent years (1997-2004), we can assess the level of the target. Countries such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Germany and Austria have experienced a rate of growth which, if they continue on the same trend, is sufficient to reach their target: while these countries have R&D intensities already higher than the EU average, in recent years they have managed to pull even further ahead. For countries such as Belgium, France or the UK and for the EU-25 as a whole, the target will be reached only if there is a substantial acceleration of the growth of R&D expenditure. For countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Malta, Latvia and Greece, the target is extremely ambitious.