

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Crest
Secretariat

CREST 1206/08

NOTE

To: Crest delegations

Subject: Draft summary conclusions of the 319th meeting of Crest, held in Brussels on 18 April 2008

The meeting was chaired by the deputy Director-General of the Research Directorate-General of the European Commission.

1. ADOPTION OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

The Committee adopted the provisional agenda as set out in doc. CM 1201/08.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE
318th MEETING**

The Committee approved the draft summary conclusions of the meeting held in Bled and Brdo on 7 and 8 February 2008 as set out in doc. CREST 1202/08.

3. INFORMATION FROM THE PRESIDENCY AND THE COMMISSION

PRESIDENCY

The SI Presidency informed the Committee of the state of affairs of current legislative proposals and other documents, as well as of upcoming events.

Preparations for the adoption of the following legislative proposals are well on track:

- Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the participation by the Community in a research and development programme aimed at supporting research and development performing SMEs undertaken by several Member States ("Eurostars Joint Programme");
- Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the participation by the Community in a research and development programme aimed at enhancing the quality of life of older people through the use of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), undertaken by several Member States;
- Proposal for a Council Regulation setting up the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking.

During the May Competitiveness Council, the following Council conclusions will be put to the Ministers for adoption:

- European Research Infrastructures and their regional dimension;
- Family-friendly Scientific Careers: towards an integrated model;
- Commission Recommendation on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities and Code of Practice for universities and other public research organisations, "IP Charter Initiative";
- Draft Council Conclusions on the Launch of the "Ljubljana Process" — towards full realisation of ERA;
- A Fresh Impetus for Competitiveness and Innovation of the European Economy: the Lead Market Initiative for Europe, venture capital funds, standardisation for innovation, pre-commercial procurement, metals industries, forest-based industries and defence industries.

The conclusions on the Special Report No. 09/2007 by the European Court of Auditors concerning "Evaluating the EU Research and Technological Development (RTD) framework programmes - could the Commission's approach be improved?" are at an advanced stage.

On 26 May, the first meeting of the EU-Russia Permanent Partnership Council on R&D will be held, during which talks will be held on a closer involvement of Russia in FP7.

COMMISSION

The Commission informed the Committee of current steps for the implementation of FP7 and of the status of both adopted and forthcoming proposals:

- The Commission has taken several initiatives to streamline the implementation of the framework programme:
 - The Guidance notes on reporting that have been published on CORDIS foresee a simplification of the Reports' structure and a reduction of the number of questionnaires;
 - The Unique registration facility will be fully introduced in May;
 - The amendment policy for FP7 will be simplified compared to previous framework programmes.

- On 11 April the Commission appointed 22 persons on the European Research Area Board (ERAB), which succeeds and builds on the European Research Advisory Board (EURAB). ERAB is responsible for advising the Commission and delivering opinions on the progress towards ERA at the request of the Commission or on the Board's own initiative. One of ERAB's key tasks will be to provide the Commission with an annual report on "the state of the European Research Area";

- The ITRE Committee (EP) adopted an opinion on the JTI proposal on Fuel Cells and Hydrogen on 8 April. The plenary vote is scheduled for the May session;

- The EP's plenary vote on the Eurostars Joint Programme took place on 10 April;
- The SET-plan is being discussed in ITRE and the plenary vote is foreseen for July. The rapporteur is Mr Buzek (EPP-PL);
- A report on Women and Science is under discussion in the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and in ITRE. The rapporteur is Ms Britta Thomsen (ESP-DK). The plenary vote is scheduled for May. Council Conclusions are envisaged (their adoption is foreseen at the Competitiveness Council on 29 May);
- Adoption by the Commission of a Gender Monitoring Report is foreseen for the second quarter of this year. The Report will analyse the extent to which gender aspects have been taken into account by projects funded under FP6;
- Adoption of the mandate for the FP6 ex-post evaluation is expected after the delivery of the positive opinions of the three programme committees (Cooperation, Capacity and People).

4. CREST PROVISIONAL WORK PROGRAMME (MARCH-DECEMBER 2008): DISCUSSION

The Chairman reminded the Committee that Article 7 of the Crest Rules of Procedure stipulates that the Committee shall draw up and regularly update a provisional work programme. He introduced the new work programme, which runs until the end of 2008 (doc. CREST 1204/08). By its nature, the provisional work programme is subject to change.

Delegations raised the following points:

- The new work programme was welcomed; it was also felt that the work programme for 2009 ought to be available by the autumn of 2008. The Committee could approve this at its 322nd meeting on 4 and 5 December 2008;

- The Committee meeting on 4 July 2008 at Director-General level was thought to be of special importance; its agenda should reflect this and focus on specific elements. It is important that Directors-General are closely involved in the Ljubljana Process (see also Item 6 of the present draft summary conclusions);
- It was suggested to look at the guidelines on Crest's working methods that were agreed in 2006. The incoming Presidency will add this subject to the work programme, in particular with a view to linking Crest's working methods to the Ljubljana Process.

The Chairman took note of delegations' remarks and agreed to their requests. In particular, he undertook to have the Committee consider its working methods in the second half of this year. He also emphasised that a timely planning of the provisional work programme between different Presidencies was important.

The Committee adopted the provisional work programme (March-December 2008) as set out in doc. CREST 1204/08.

5. CREST INFORMATION POLICY

5.1 Approval of the publication of the Crest website

The Secretariat presented the draft Crest website. Reactions from delegations were unanimously positive. The Committee agreed to lift the *limité* status of all past and future final Crest documents (both plenary and working group documents) unless the Committee would decide otherwise. Therefore, Article 11 of the Crest Rules of Procedure¹ will only apply upon explicit request from now on. As far as existing documents that are eligible for publication on the site were concerned, a list of which had been sent to delegations for approval to publication on the site, no objections were raised.

¹ The proceedings of the Committee and its working parties shall be confidential.

The Commission observed that the Crest website is an important instrument and asked Members and Observers to suggest links to their national research sites. Such suggestions should be sent to the Crest secretariat. Conversely, Members and Observers were asked to include a reference to the Crest website on their national research sites once the Crest site would be up and running. The Secretariat undertook to inform the Committee of this.

The Committee agreed to the publication of the website following completion of the final work on the site.

5.2 ERA website - Information from the Commission

The Commission presented the new ERA website. A new site (which is linked to the previous one) is now under construction in order to simplify public access to information. The Commission will send the structure of the site to Members and Observers for comments.

6. FOLLOW-UP OF THE INFORMAL COMPETITIVENESS COUNCIL

6.1 Developing the ERA vision

6.2 ERA governance — developing the partnership

The Presidency introduced both items on the basis of the draft summary report of the informal meeting of Competitiveness ministers held in Brdo (SI) on 15 April 2008. He underlined the need of a future vision on the European Research Area (ERA) that is shared by Member States, associated countries and the Commission. Such a vision should be discussed and agreed by all interested parties (universities, civil society, regional authorities, research organisations, private sector, etc.). It should be based on the knowledge triangle (i.e. research, innovation and education) and include the free movement of knowledge (the 5th freedom).

A first draft of this vision is expected during the second half of 2008. The Council should endorse it. Discussions should continue during future Presidencies and the Presidency welcomed the willingness of the forthcoming Presidency trios to ensure the follow-up of the Ljubljana Process together with the Commission. The cycle must be well structured and well planned. The advisory role of Crest in the Ljubljana Process was also highlighted.

Associated countries should be involved.

The upcoming Presidencies (FR, SE and CZ) emphasised the importance of the Ljubljana Process and of its coherence and declared that it will be prominent on their agendas. CZ emphasised in particular the importance of ERA governance. A flow-chart of the Process will be drafted and continuously updated by the General Secretariat of the Council.

Delegations made the following comments:

- The Ljubljana Process should be clearly defined in a way that everybody can agree on. Work should start directly after the May Competitiveness Council, which is expected to adopt conclusions on the Process. There should be a coherent 18-month programme;
- Developing the ERA vision, to which the private sector should contribute to a greater extent than at present, should take into account global competition;
- There is a need for increased human resources and the question was raised how young people should be attracted to research and how researchers from third countries could be attracted to the EU;
- Crest should be actively involved in the Ljubljana Process and in particular contribute to the preparation of the informal ministerial councils at the request of Presidency. The role of Crest in relation to the Council's preparatory bodies should be looked at. The use of the Open Method of Coordination should be extended and the Ljubljana Process should be taken into account in both the present 4th cycle and the future 5th cycle;
- The role of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) was emphasised;
- Account should be taken of the relevant provisions in the new Lisbon Treaty;
- Benchmark indicators and statistics for the ERA vision were important. Concrete goals should be set and progress towards ERA aims should be measured, without extra administrative burdens;
- The ERA vision should be based clearly on the knowledge triangle;

- Associated countries acknowledged their involvement in Crest as observers but asked questions about their role in future informal Competitiveness Councils;
- The importance of ERAWATCH was mentioned;
- Albania, which recently joined Crest as an Observer, pointed to the link between research and national education. Albania will soon adopt a national R&D strategy and set up a national research agency.

The Commission observed that the five ERA initiatives will develop their own dynamics and are in line with the Lisbon Process. The Commission Staff Working Document "Results of the Public Consultation on the Green paper "The European Research Area. New perspectives"" (doc. 8159/08) was a useful document in this respect. Research should not be seen isolated. The knowledge triangle may outstretch EU responsibilities; articulation between the various elements may be a better option than trying to cover fully all three elements. Developments in the period after 2010 will depend on what ERA will deliver. Research investments are at present lagging behind the 3 % target.

The Chairman agreed that there should be a shared vision of ERA and that Crest should play a major role in the Ljubljana Process. The Presidency flowchart should be prepared in partnership with the two trio Presidencies and the Commission and be kept up to date by the General Secretariat of the Council. The ERA vision will be ready by the end of the year. Council conclusions on the launch of the Ljubljana Process are expected to be adopted by the May Competitiveness Council.

7. KEY FIGURES, INCLUDING INDICATORS TO MONITOR ERA

The Commission presented an outline of the Key Figures 2008 and the indicators to monitor ERA, stating that a set of key indicators needs to be identified to monitor progress towards ERA. The Commission outline on indicators is based on the six axes mentioned in the ERA Green Paper. They have been discussed at inter-service level within the Commission in order to articulate them with other policies as well as with other actors.

Delegations were very positive about the Commission's work on ERA indicators. They also mentioned the need for relevant and evidence-based benchmarks. They cautioned that the list of indicators is impressive but that some indicators should have a higher policy priority than others. It should also be defined clearly what progress towards ERA means: should the EU be compared with the world outside or should data be limited to the EU itself? Output should be measured both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Finally, it was observed that the Key Figures publication is a Commission publication whereas monitoring ERA is not an exclusive Commission responsibility. In the future, it needs to be clarified how ERA should be formally monitored; Crest's role also needs to be defined clearly in this respect.

The Commission reacted by saying that this is an evolving process. A large number of indicators are useful in order to create a broad indicator basis. A meeting with organisations that have expertise in research on indicators will be held during the second half of 2008.

Comments in writing by delegations are expected by **23 May 2008** at the latest. The Key Figures 2008, including a first assessment of progress towards ERA, will be finalised in the autumn of this year.

8. UPDATE ON THE 2008 ERA INITIATIVES

The Commission presented the state of affairs on the five ERA initiatives.

Management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities and Code of Practice for universities and other public research organisations. The Commission Recommendation is aimed at improving the knowledge transfer between European public research organisations and the private sector. The Recommendation provides Member States with key principles to establish an intellectual property/knowledge transfer policy and to provide public research organisations with operational principles. The Code of Practice will set out principles for internal intellectual property and knowledge transfer policies and for collaborative and contract research.

Towards Joint Programming in Research. A discussion on joint programming is foreseen at the Crest meeting on 4 July 2008 and Council conclusions are expected to be adopted in December 2008. There is considerable support for stronger cooperation. Specific areas have to be agreed on the basis of pre-defined criteria. Joint programming is a structuring process that should put Member States in the lead for determining the areas in which they would be ready to determine common research agendas. Crest may be invited to express its opinion on the identification of areas for joint programming.

A wide opening of the European Research Area to the world. In the framework of the five initiatives planned in 2008 to follow up the ERA Green Paper, the Commission will present a Communication on a strategic framework for international S&T cooperation at the end of July. The following key principles will guide this framework: opening up and widening ERA, coherence of policies and complementarity of programmes, developing strategic partnerships, favouring a bi-regional approach for future S&T agreements, working together at EU and national level, making Europe more attractive as a research partner and easing the mobility of knowledge and researchers.

A long-term partnership between Member States and the Commission will be crucial for a successful implementation of the proposed actions. The role of the Crest working group on internationalisation was also mentioned.

European Researchers' Partnership. This initiative is based on reforms and actions already underway and foresees that Member States and the Commission will jointly take forward a number of priority actions in four key areas affecting mobility and careers: open recruitment, social security and supplementary pensions, employment and working conditions, and training and skills. Member States are expected to draw up national plans to address specific issues on the basis of common overall objectives of the partnership. The Community will seek to optimise existing Community instruments for reinforcing the partnership. The priority actions that will be identified should be implemented by the end of 2010. There is a clear interest in the partnership approach. The Commission expects to adopt a Communication on this in May 2008. Council conclusions are expected in September 2008 and should be followed by national plans that are expected to take shape in the winter of 2008-2009.

Legal framework for new European Research Infrastructures (ERI). Prior to October 2006, when the ESFRI roadmap was released, there was no coordinated EU support for infrastructures. In the autumn of 2007, the Commission prepared an initiative on ERI. This is based on Article 171 TEC. An ERI will be a European entity with a scientific, non-commercial character that will provide world-class research services. A draft Regulation is scheduled in May-June 2008, the adoption of which by the Council is foreseen in December 2008.

The Commission declared that this initiative had been launched at the request of Member States. The Commission itself is unable to take action outside the FP7 framework. ERI is therefore primarily a Member State responsibility. The Commission will merely act as a catalyst. It follows from this that the Commission expects initiatives by Member States. The legal framework will be a new instrument. The stakeholders should propose statutes, a seat (which could be in an associated country, provided EU law will apply), financial rules, etc., while the Commission will only oversee such arrangements. Associated countries are allowed to join but their national laws should be aligned.

9. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE 3% TARGET AND THE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION (OMC)

9.1. Conclusions of the final report of the Working Group on R&D in services - Discussion and possible adoption of the conclusions

The Chairperson of the subgroup presented the draft conclusions on R&D in Services which are based on the report on the OMC working group "R&D in Services". The working group has provided suggestions and recommendations on how to develop the service sector with research-related policy measures.

Delegations welcomed the conclusions and encouraged the working group to continue its activities.

The Committee adopted the conclusions (see Crest document no 1205/08).

9.2. Topics for the 4th OMC cycle - state of play

Internationalisation of R&D — facing the challenge of globalisation: Approaches to a pro-active international policy in S&T

The working group will invite the Commission's Science Counsellors from the EC delegations in China, Brazil, India and Russia to its meeting on 25 June 2008, at which an exchange of views will take place on Community S&T cooperation with these countries.

Mutual learning on approaches to improve the excellence of research in universities

A preparatory meeting of the working group was held in February 2008. The chairperson and two rapporteurs group have been appointed. The working group will present an interim report to the Committee in September 2008.

Industry-led competence centres — Aligning academic/public research with enterprise and industry needs

The working group held its first meeting in February. Two other meetings will be held in spring, and the final meeting is planned in September 2008. The final report is expected to be put to Crest in December.

Peer review of policy mixes

The peer review of Austria and Bulgaria is on track and following preparatory missions the actual peer review visits to these countries will take place in late May and early June, respectively. The first results can be expected in September.

9.3. Launch of a data collection "snapshot" on national R&D expenditures

The Commission presented this item. A data collection exercise on R&D expenditures had been launched in 2004 and 2005. The new snapshot follows a request by the March European Council to "set out (...) how progress towards national R&D investment targets will be achieved". There is a need therefore to get more recent data (regular 2008 official data collection provides figures referring to 2006) in order to better assess progress towards the 3% objective

Delegations made the following comments: It is difficult to produce reliable forecasts due to uncertainty about inflation and growth rates. Before launching the snapshot, the Commission might wait for the new R&D data collection by Eurostat (June) to see which figures will be available. Does the Commission also expect comments on the format?

The Commission replied as follows:

- R&D intensity data for 2007 and 2008 are not yet available. Member States should be able to produce estimates for these years (with the possibility of consolidation of such figures at a later stage). In addition, some forecasts for the years to come could be made on the basis of expected inflation and growth rates;
- DG RTD is working closely with Eurostat, but the collected data do not allow for a proper assessment of recent progress towards the R&D intensity targets set by Member States. There is a need to complement official R&D data collection with more recent (estimated) data and forecasts;
- Comments on the format of the snapshot would also be welcome.

The Chairman concluded the discussion by stating that the process of data collection on national R&D expenditures is endorsed by Crest.

10. AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING (4 July 2008, Brussels)

The July meeting at Director-General level will address the following subjects:

- ERA vision: report on the ERA rationale, first ideas on ERA vision;
- ERA governance: developing the partnership, moving forward the Ljubljana Process, reporting in the National Reform Programms on contributions to ERA;
- Update on the 2008 ERA initiatives: joint programming, international S&T cooperation strategy, research infrastructures;
- Preparation of the July Informal Competitiveness Council.

Given that the July meeting will be held at Director-General level, delegations emphasised the need to concentrate on the ERA vision. They also enquired about the status of the expert groups' reports.

The Commission replied that the Communication on research infrastructures is available and that the report on the ERA rationale will be issued very soon on the relevant website. All seven reports are being prepared in PDF format and will be issued soon.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Seat of European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT): a deadline has been set for applications (25 April 2008). EIT's seat will be on the agenda of the May Competitiveness Council. A decision is expected during the SI Presidency.
