



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 3 October 2008

**SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**Crest
Secretariat**

CREST 1208/08

NOTE

To:	Crest delegations
Subject:	Draft summary conclusions of the 321 st meeting of Crest, held in Aix-en-Provence (Cadarache) on 4-5 September 2008

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

1. ADOPTION OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

The Committee adopted the provisional agenda as set out in doc. CM. 2834/08

**2. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE
320th MEETING**

One delegation requested to add under AOB a reference concerning the prolongation of EDCTP¹ on which the Commission agreed to provide information in due time. The Committee approved the draft summary conclusions of the 320th meeting held in Brussels on 4 July 2008 set out in doc. CREST 1207/1/08 (REV1), as amended.

¹ European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership

3. INFORMATION FROM THE PRESIDENCY AND THE COMMISSION

- **Presidency**

The Presidency thanked the participants to have responded to the invitation and the CEA for hosting the meeting.

Further to the discussions held at the informal Competitiveness Council meeting on 17 July in Versailles, the main activities of the Council will focus on drawing up the ERA 2020 Vision, based on four pillars:

- Presence of ERA in all fronts of scientific research;
- Strategic governance: set-up of a strong link between CREST and STOA (Science and Technology Options Assessment of the European Parliament);
- Efficient mobilisation of resources and dissemination of results;
- Reinforced synergies between the Community and inter-governmental level.

With the aim of facilitating the discussion in the Council and, subsequently, adopting Council conclusions on the ERA 2020 Vision at Competitiveness Council on 2 December 2008, two important meetings will be held:

- on 3 October 2008: three parallel workshops will be organised as part of the assessment of the consultation on the ERA Green paper on the basis of which the Presidency will prepare draft Council conclusions on the ERA 2020 Vision;
- on 20 October 2008: an additional CREST meeting will be held in Brussels with a view to providing useful input to the draft Council conclusions text.

Discussion will continue on the Commission Communication "Towards joint programming of research: Working together to tackle common challenges more efficiently" with the aim of adopting Council conclusions on the concept and objectives of the Joint Programming at the December Competitiveness Council. In connection with the coordination of national research programmes the Presidency already proposed to the Council draft conclusions on common commitment of the Member States to combat neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's, to be adopted by the Competitiveness Council on 26 September.

Other activities in the field of research during the remainder of the French Presidency term will be the following:

- The inauguration of the first meeting of the Governing Board of the EIT on 15 September in Budapest;
- The creation of the intergovernmental platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (ipbes) in November in Kuala Lumpur;
- Establishment of the "Temporary European Town of Sciences" on 14-16 November in Grand Palais in Paris;
- A conference to address partnership and mobility will take place in Rennes on 20-21 November.

The Presidency also drew attention of delegates to two other meetings of high interest for CREST:

- Meeting of the first laureates of ERC at the Collège de France on 7 October;
- ECRI 2008, Conference on the research infrastructures to be held in Versailles on 9-11 December.

- **Commission**

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

- All five work programmes for 2009 were adopted during the course of the summer;
- On 3 September 22 calls for proposals were published under the Cooperation and Capacities specific programmes, covering an indicative budget of more than EUR 1,16 billion;
- FP6 ex-post evaluation: the adoption of the report is expected by the end of 2008;

- Article 169 initiatives :
 - Eurostars: after the adoption of the Decision on 23 June the Commission adopted the decision concerning the dedicated implementation structure; work on other activities is in progress;
 - European Metrology Research Programme (EMRP): impact assessment is under way;
 - BONUS (Baltic Organisations' Network for Funding Science) : the impact assessment is expected by the end of 2008;
- The ERA 2008 initiatives:
 - the Communication "Towards joint programming of research: Working together to tackle common challenges more effectively" was adopted on 15 July 2008;
 - the Proposal for a Council Regulation on the Community legal framework for a European Research Infrastructure (ERI) was adopted on 25 July 2008;
 - a paper publication of the Recommendation on the management of intellectual property, including guidance for implementation of the Code of Practice, is due by the end of September;
- The Annual Report on the research and technological development activities in the European Union in 2007, prepared by the Commission on the basis of Article 173 of the Treaty, was adopted on 18 August;
- The Communication on the Methodology and Terms of Reference to be used for the Review to be carried out by independent experts concerning the European Research Council Structures and Mechanisms was adopted on 26 August; the work of independent experts is to be concluded by summer 2009;
- The Communication on the European Marine and Maritime Research Strategy was adopted on 3 September;
- EDPC: if decision is made for its prolongation a new proposal will be needed which is to be decided in co-decision between the Council and EP;
- Annual report on the ERC in 2007 was adopted in the second half of July;
- Gender monitoring report is expected for the 3rd quarter.

4. COMMISSION PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION ON THE COMMUNITY LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES

The Commission presented its proposal for a Council regulation based on Articles 171 and 172(1) of the Treaty (consultation with the EP). The objective of this proposal is to provide a framework legal instrument to facilitate the joint establishment and operation of European research infrastructures (ERI). An ERI should have a legal personality, have a spirit of a truly joint venture, be flexible to adapt to the requirements of specific infrastructures and provide some of the privileges allowed at a national level for international organisations (in particular VAT exemption). The Commission aims at reaching political agreement on the draft framework regulation at the December Competitiveness Council with a view to its adoption by mid 2009.

Associated countries noted with satisfaction that the draft regulation gives them the possibility to become members of an ERI; however, they raised a serious concern over their rights and conditions as ERI members, in particular as regards the wording of Article 8(2)(3). Several Associated countries expressed their wish to have a different status in the membership structure than other third countries.

Delegates also raised questions as regards the legal basis for the draft regulation (Article 171), the exclusion of the private sector as ERI members and the application procedure (decision making, appeal procedure).

The Commission reiterated that the Associated countries are considered as very important partners in establishing ERIs and that their status should be equal to that of the member States, therefore, it was hopeful that the Council preparatory bodies would find the right balance between their demands and the prerogatives of Member States under the Community law.

As regards the choice of the legal basis the Commission explained that this proposal should not be confused with the Joint Technology Initiatives where a separate decisions is needed for each of them but should be understood as a framework regulation for all ERIs which considerably simplifies the decision-making process for their establishment.

On the question concerning the exclusion of private partners from the ERI membership the Commission explained that one of the main advantages of the proposal is to develop structures exempted from VAT, due to the fact that ERIs will be considered as international organisations, which exclude the possibility for private companies to become members. This, however, does not imply that private companies are excluded as they can become sponsors or associated partners.

The Chairperson underlined that the discussion is under way in the Research Working Group which will try to find a compromise solution to all major concerns raised by the delegates with a view to reaching political agreement at the December Competitiveness Council. CREST will be regularly informed on the progress made on this dossier in the Council.

5. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION : "TOWARDS JOINT PROGRAMMING IN RESEARCH"

The Commission presented the Communication on Joint programming. The main concept of the Joint programming, as proposed by the Commission, is the involvement of Member States on a voluntary basis, on the principle of variable geometry and open access, and is aimed at defining, developing and implementing common strategic research agendas based on a common vision on how to address major societal challenges. It does not involve Community funding *a priori* as the main aim is the definition of common strategies of Member States involved by putting together national resources. However, the possibility of complementary Community funding is not excluded, depending on the added value, European dimension and possible structuring impact of the initiatives concerned.

A presentation to the Competitiveness Council is scheduled for 26 September 2008 with a view to the adoption of Council conclusions at the December Competitiveness Council. The main aim of these conclusions is to endorse the concept and objectives of Joint programming as well as the establishment of a group of high-level representatives of Member States the primary task of which would be to select a limited number of specific areas for Joint Programming by summer 2009, on the basis of clear criteria and stakeholder consultation. The endorsement of their work by the Council will take place by the end of 2009.

In their reactions, delegates raised questions concerning the criteria to select the themes, the possibilities for Associated countries to participate, the membership of the high-level group, the proposed time schedule, the need to establish framework conditions and how existing programmes will fit into the concept of Joint Programming. In addition, delegations requested further clarifications as regards the role of the private sector and stressed the need that in the process of defining the concept of the Joint Programming the experience from ERA-NET, Article 169 initiatives, JTIs and KICs be taken into account.

Commission insisted on the voluntary aspect of the Joint Programming from Member States and Associated countries and on the importance to reach a critical mass when the decision is made on the areas of action. Moreover, it underlined that the work on the framework conditions for Joint Programming will be very important and underlined the distinction to be made between the concept of "Joint Programming" and "joint programmes".

The Chairperson concluded by stating that in the process of developing the Joint Programming the first priority should be to reach a common understanding of its concept which would involve Member States and Associated countries as the main drivers.

6. PRESENTATION ON SCIENCE AND RESEARCH POLICY IN FRANCE

Mr Gilles Bloch, Director General of Research and Innovation, gave a presentation on the research policy of France.

7. 3RD LISBON MUTUAL LEARNING EXERCISE

The Commission presented its proposal for the mutual learning exercise, to be undertaken by CREST on 4 December 2008, the primary aim of which is to reinforce the ERA governance in the Lisbon process. It will also serve as a valuable input for the Key Issues Paper on the competitiveness for the Spring European Council.

The exercise will focus on two points:

- The extent to which the European dimension is incorporated into national and regional research policies and measures;
- Assessment of progress and difficulties in reaching the R&D investment targets.

The Commission will produce an informal synthetic paper with background analysis and data as an input to the discussions. The paper will contain in an annex a short analysis of each Member State. It is proposed to reduce the number of sub-groups from five to four in order to allow more cross-country discussions. With a view to avoid inconsistency between the ECOFIN and Competitiveness Council conclusions in the run-up to the Spring summit, the CREST report on the mutual learning exercise will also be transmitted to the Economic Policy Committee as their examination of the country-specific recommendations in the Commission's Annual Progress Report also covers R&D for some countries.

It is proposed that CREST appoints the two chairmen of the subgroups as well as two rapporteurs who should be charged with drafting the report and reporting on the outcome and main conclusions to CREST at its meeting on 5 December. The appointment of the chairmen and the two rapporteurs should be finalized by 20 October 2008.

Delegates welcomed the intention to further integrate ERA in the Lisbon process in order to streamline the discussion, however, some of them expressed concern that the narrow focus on the ERA would exclude other important subjects. The issue of National Reform Programmes (NRPs) was also raised, since the format and the way R&D is covered may differ a lot between Member States. Some delegations marked their preference for five sub-groups rather than four.

The Commission insisted on focussing this exercise on the ERA and progress on the R&D investment targets. Should a third topic be selected, it would be up to delegates to decide. The same goes for the number of sub-groups.

The Committee adopted the Commission proposal in principle, but asked delegates to send any further requests for amendments directly to the Commission, so that they could be discussed, if need be, at the CREST meeting in October.

8. OPEN METHOD OF CO-ORDINATION ANNUAL CYCLE

8.1 OMC evaluation exercise

The Commission introduced the topic reminding of the e-mail it sent two months earlier on this topic. The Lisbon expert group will help to assess NRPs and the report which should be ready before the end of the year could be presented at the first CREST meeting in 2009, if this was agreeable.

Delegates raised questions concerning the composition of the evaluation group and the coherence with other OMC subjects. Associated countries confirmed their involvement in this process and underlined that they are included in the stakeholders' perspectives.

The Commission explained that 11 experts would be part of the group, involving CREST delegates and experts who are involved in other OMC topics. Stakeholders will be duly consulted.

8.2 Peer reviews of national policy mixes : Austria and Bulgaria

Austria : the rapporteur of the Policy Mix Review Team presented the final report and pointed out in particular the following findings of the review:

- *Vision* : the range of goals is wide but there is currently a lack of a shared, holistic vision and a coherent set of public policies to stimulate the development of the entire R&D innovation system;
- *Policy formulation structures and processes*: it is considered that Austria would benefit from a re-evaluation of the structures and processes in place to formulate coherent R&D and innovation policies. The autonomy of agencies and the separation of responsibilities between ministries and agencies could also be revisited;
- *Policy implementation*: the current complexity of the governance system responsible for the implementation of policies is at present not sufficient to warrant further major structural reforms;
- *Industrial R&D and innovation*: The share of direct R&D support in the form of subsidies to individual firms to pursue R&D projects is very high and much to the detriment of more collaborative research projects.

AT delegation thanked the peer review team for their excellent work and underlined that the impact would be important for their contribution to the 2020 strategy. Concerning the procedure of the peer review, it raised the question of the exact role of peers in particular as regards the disclosure of information received during the review.

The Chairperson concluded that due to late receipt of the report its adoption is postponed until the next CREST meeting.

Bulgaria : a first discussion was held on the draft report of the Policy Mix Review Team.

The following points were underlined:

- Bulgaria is a catching up country with a system under transformation;
- Strong in some areas (chemistry, physics, engineering, maths);
- There is a need for a clear vision;
- There is no lack of strategy but it should be more focused;
- Fragmentation issue raises a particular concern;
- The participation of universities and academia in research projects is not sufficient;
- There is a lack of human resources;
- There is a weak link between research and innovation;
- To become a science based country Bulgaria will need to undertake further reform efforts.

BG delegation thanked the peer review team for their excellent work and accepted their findings as the description of the current state of affairs. Amongst the main points of concern of their R&D and innovation policy it mentioned in particular the need for stronger review culture in Bulgaria and research performing universities and academia as well as the fragmentation of the research landscape. This review represents to BG a valuable basis for the domestic discussion on how to improve the present situation.

The adoption of the final report is scheduled for 20 October 2008.

8.3 OMC (5th cycle)

Upon request of the Commission at the last CREST meeting on 4 July only one contribution was received as regards the possible topics for the 5th OMC cycle. The suggested topics focused on the ERA governance and the subsidiarity principle. In particular the Commission mentioned the following topics as potentially interesting:

- Researchers near retirement
- Research publication and open access
- Setting of national sciences and technologies priorities
- National programmes
- Effectiveness of public programme funding.

The Commission stressed that topics should be relevant to a minimum number of Member States, and that there should only be about four.

Delegations underlined the need to link the 5th cycle to the Ljubljana process and suggested the following topics: the impact of investment in R&D, the need for more synergies between the different fields, the impact of the strategy mixes on innovation areas.

The Commission stressed that OMC is concentrating on national policies and, therefore, questioned the relevance of focusing OMC groups on governance issues for ERA, since this would seem suitable for discussions in CREST.

The adoption of the selected topics is scheduled to take place at the next CREST meeting on 20 October, and the mandates at the December meeting. Delegations were invited to provide input by 1st October to the Secretariat on the basis of which the Commission will prepare a note for further discussion.

The results of the universities group will be presented in December as well as the reports on the achievements of some of the 4th OMC cycle groups. It was considered as premature to include the KICs into the mutual learning exercise.

9. AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING (20 OCTOBER 2008, BRUXELLES)

The October meeting in Brussels will address the following issues:

- CREST work programme 2009
- ERA vision (FR presidency)
- Policy mix Peer Review reports
- New topics for 5th OMC annual cycle
- Presentation of reports on the 4th OMC annual cycle

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- CZ informed the Committee that the upcoming Czech Presidency would host the CREST meeting in Prague on 11 and 12 of June.
- The Commission's policy on the recruitment of seconded national experts from non-governmental organisations and from the private sector is currently in the process of being amended. DG RTD will liaise with DG ADMIN to update CREST on the further developments.
