

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Crest
Secretariat

CREST 1210/08

NOTE

To:	Crest delegations
Subject:	Draft summary conclusions of the 322 nd meeting of Crest, held in Brussels on 20 October 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. 3564/08

**2. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE
321st MEETING**

The Committee approved the draft summary conclusions of the 321st meeting held in Aix-en-Provence on 4 and 5 September, set out in doc. CREST 1208/08.

3. INFORMATION FROM THE PRESIDENCY AND THE COMMISSION

- **Presidency**

The Presidency informed the Committee of the outcome of the Competitiveness Council of 26 September at which four sets of Council conclusions were adopted:

- Council resolution on the future of European Space Policy (adopted by the 5th "Space Council");
- Council conclusions on responsible nanosciences and nanotechnologies research;
- Council conclusions concerning common commitment by the Member States to combat neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's; and
- Council conclusions on better careers and more mobility: A European partnership for researchers.

With a view to the Competitiveness Council of 2 December, the main activities of the Council will focus on the following issues:

- Drawing up of an ERA 2020 Vision, on the basis of an input from CREST;
- Reaching political agreement on the draft regulation concerning the European Research Infrastructures;
- Adoption of Council conclusions on Joint programming;
- Adoption of Council conclusions on a European strategy for marine and maritime research;
- Adoption of Council conclusions on a strategic European framework for international science and technology cooperation.

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

- 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 young researchers in Europe will take place in Rennes on 20-21 November;
- ICT 08, Conference on information and communication technologies will be held in Lyon on 25-27 November.
- ECRI 2008, Conference on the research infrastructures will be held in Versailles on 9-11 December.

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

- Conference "European Union - Research and SMEs", held in Paris on 15 and 16 September, on the outcome of which the French Presidency is preparing Presidency conclusions;
- GMES 2008 Forum - Space at the service of the environment and security, held on 17 September in Lille;
- Meeting of the first laureates of ERC at the Collège de France, held on 7 October;

- **Commission**

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

- Work programmes of the specific programmes "Cooperation" and "Euratom" are being updated and adoption is foreseen for mid November;
- 14 new calls for proposals will be published on 19 November under the "Cooperation" and "Euratom" specific programmes;
- Renewal of membership of Advisory Groups is currently under way;

- FP6 ex-post evaluation: the adoption of the report is expected by the end of 2008, after the December CREST meeting, to be presented during the incoming Czech Presidency;
- The expert group on the future of Networks of Excellence submitted its final report on 30 September;
- European Research Infrastructures: EP nominated Mrs. Teresa Riera Madurell (PSE-ES) as the rapporteur for this proposal for a Council regulation;
- Better careers and more mobility: EP nominated Ms. Pia Elda Locatelli (PSE-IT) as rapporteur for a report of the EP on its own initiative, following the adoption of the Commission Communication on this matter;
- Adoption of Gender monitoring report is delayed and is expected for the beginning of 2009.

4. CREST PROVISIONAL WORK PROGRAMME 2009

The Committee held an exchange of views on the first draft CREST provisional work programme for 2009, prepared by the Commission after first initial consultations with the incoming Czech and Swedish presidencies. The draft provisional work programme includes proposed indicative agendas for six CREST plenary meetings, out of which two at Directors-General level. As suggested, the work of CREST in 2009 would focus on three main priorities: reinforcement of the ERA governance, priorities in the field of research for the period after 2010 Lisbon agenda, and OMC annual cycles.

In their responses, delegations stressed that the priority areas should be more interlinked and that specific activities for each priority should be defined. In addition, several delegations called for better focused agendas for the two planned meetings at Directors-General level. Moreover, some delegations suggested that meetings of Directors-General should be organised in break-out sessions to allow for better discussions and achieving the best results possible. The Commission was open to this approach.

On some more specific questions raised by delegations, the Commission gave the following explanations:

- EU research policy "tool box": the Commission explained that this would be a document describing current research policy instruments and their complementarity, as requested by the "Trio" of Presidencies in the context of the "Ljubljana Process";
- Participation of stakeholders in ERA: the Commission said that this issue would be considered by CREST in 2009 and the possibility of inviting key stakeholders to a future meeting was already considered by the CZ Presidency;
- Role of CREST in FP7 mid-term evaluation: the Commission pointed out that the mid-term review has to be issued by the end of 2010 and that for the time being no precise calendar has been prepared;
- ERA conference: the Commission explained that this would be a Commission conference organised on its own initiative, but stressed that partnership and ownership with Member States and the Presidencies are key to its success and key to the successful implementations of the "Ljubljana Process".
- Priorities for the research policy in post 2010 Lisbon agenda: the Commission agreed that this topic, to be tackled by Directors-General at the July meeting, needed to be well prepared.

The Chairperson concluded that a new updated version of the provisional work programme for 2009 will be prepared to reflect the comments made by delegations.

5. EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA – 2020 VISION

Following stakeholders' seminar on 3 October where delegations expressed their first reactions on the draft ERA 2020 Vision, the Presidency presented a new draft text based also on written contributions received after the seminar.

While the majority of delegations welcomed the new draft ERA 2020 Vision and could agree to the basic principles contained in the text, they called for further improvements in particular by raising the following issues:

- the text should not refer to any of instruments to achieve the goals set (such as Community patent, EIT, etc.);
- more emphasis should be put on human resources;
- the vision should place ERA in the world context;
- its structure should be better streamlined with the ERA Green Paper, in particular as regards priorities;
- a more holistic approach on the knowledge triangle should be taken;
- there should be more focus on the role of science in society;
- the headings should be more general and thus more understandable to the general public.

The Presidency expressed its satisfaction over the very positive reactions received in general from delegations and agreed that further improvements are needed before CREST would be in a position to endorse the ERA 2020 Vision text. In line with this approach, delegations were requested to provide additional written comments on the basis of which the Presidency will produce the final draft to be endorsed by CREST following written procedure. The aim is to annex the ERA 2020 Vision, as agreed by CREST, to Council conclusions which will be examined by the Council preparatory bodies with a view to their adoption by the Competitiveness Council on 2 December.

6. COMMUNICATION ON A STRATEGIC EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION

The Commission presented its Communication, adopted by the college on 24 September 2008. The main principles of this Communication underlying the European framework for international S&T cooperation, are the following:

- Widening the ERA and making it more open to the world;

- Ensuring coherence of policies and complementarity of programmes and thus ensuring that Europe's international S&T strategy underpins the EU's main policy objectives, such as combating climate change, bridging the digital divide, securing sustainability of energy supplies, biodiversity and ecosystems, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- Fostering strategic S&T cooperation with key third countries: An effective international cooperation strategy requires a long-term commitment by the Community and Member States and a new approach to jointly defining priority research areas for cooperation with key third countries;
- Developing the attractiveness of Europe as a research partner in order to maintain research excellence and develop linkages between researchers and institutions in Europe and worldwide;
- Launching results-oriented partnerships on information society regulation;
- More cooperation between the Community and Member States with a view to increasing the attractiveness of Europe's research and fostering better conditions for investment and acquisitions in key markets.

As the main orientations for actions to make the ERA more open to the world, the Commission stressed in particular strengthening the international dimension of the ERA by integrating Europe's neighbours into the ERA and fostering strategic cooperation with key third countries through geographic and thematic targeting, as well as improving the framework conditions for international S&T cooperation by tackling scientific challenges through global research infrastructures, by better mobility and networking of researchers, by ensuring more reciprocity in S&T agreements and by good management of IPR issues.

The Commission concluded its presentation by saying that in order to make real progress a stronger partnership needs to be built between the Member States and the Community with a dedicated institutional setting to run and guide this partnership, and called the Council to draw operational conclusions on this issue.

Delegations welcomed the fact that the Commission presented this long awaited Communication and expressed broad support to its content. Nevertheless, several issues were raised which need further consideration, in particular the following:

- While Member States agree there should be more coordination between bilateral and Community agreements, the principle of subsidiarity must clearly be preserved;
- A better use of funds for international cooperation should be ensured, at national and Community level;
- Decision has to be made with which international partners the Community would like to cooperate and on which areas;
- There is no need to prioritise ICT over other themes, as it might be concluded by reading the Communication;
- More details should be provided on the institutional setting to run the partnership between the Member States and the Community;
- Before engaging in drafting Council conclusions, several delegations suggested that CREST should provide its input on the basis of the work done by its OMC Working Group on the internationalisation of R&D;
- The role of the private sector and associated countries needs to be clarified.

In its response, the Commission pointed out that the main idea of its Communication is to set up the strategic framework for international cooperation based on a partnership between the Member States and the Community without seeking the establishment of a heavy institutional structure for its implementation. The aim is not to interfere in bilateral activities of Member States but rather to stimulate better coordination, better understanding of what Member States are doing bilaterally and in particular better use of resources. The Commission also stressed that it would be premature to decide already at this stage with which international partners the Community and Member States would like to cooperate and on which areas without first deciding on the vision for international cooperation agreed on the basis of a bottom-up approach. It agreed that a more prominent role should be given to the private sector.

The Commission confirmed the need to respect the subsidiarity principle and clarified that the Commission will by no means interfere in national competences. The strategic framework rather aims at finding ways on how to better work together at European level in order to facilitate a more efficient dialogue with third countries and to avoid wasting resources.

With regard to ICT the Commission stressed that the strategic framework does not intend to privilege any specific area but applies to all areas of science, research and technology, while ICT is, however, an important issue in international S&T cooperation.

As regards the role of Associated Countries, the Commission recognised the important role they have been playing in the development of the ERA and clarified that their status regarding the institutional setting for implementing the strategic framework will be defined by the forthcoming Council conclusions.

The Chairperson concluded that the work on this Communication will continue in the Council preparatory bodies and that CREST will be regularly informed on the progress made.

7. OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION – ANNUAL CYCLE

7.1 Draft final report of the Working Group on Internationalisation of R&D

The Chairman of the Group presented an interim report on Internationalisation of R&D and its preliminary recommendations, and requested delegations to provide additional input with a view to finalising the report before submitting it to CREST for adoption.

Delegations welcomed the interim report, in particular as regards draft recommendations on the need to provide better synergies between national and Community agreements, and suggested that its outcome could serve as a good basis for the discussion on the follow up to the Commission communication on the strategic European framework for international S&T cooperation (see point 6 above). In addition, they raised the following issues which in their view need to be further considered:

- It should be considered where are the boundaries of international cooperation, in particular as regards the country specific recommendations;
- Recommendation to expand ERAWATCH in terms of content and Third Countries covered seems to be too ambitious and not cost effective;
- Reinforcement of the reciprocity principle between the Community and Third Countries is too complex;
- It is too early to establish a joint implementation agency for running joint calls.

The Chairman of the Group proposed to postpone the discussion and adoption of the final report by CREST to its meeting in January 2009.

7.2 Working Group on Policy mix for Austria

The Committee welcomed the final report and agreed on publishing it on which the Austrian delegation expressed satisfaction.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that the final report for Bulgaria would be presented at the CREST meeting on 5 December. The Chairperson also asked delegations which wish to be examined by the Working Group on Policy mix to indicate this intention to the CREST Secretariat.

8. 3rd LISBON MUTUAL LEARNING EXERCISE

The Commission informed the Committee on the appointment of chairmen and rapporteurs for the 3rd Lisbon mutual learning exercise, to be undertaken by CREST on 4 December 2008, as follows:

- Chairmen: Group 1: the Netherlands;
Group 2: Sweden;
Group 3: Spain;
Group 4: discussions still under way.
- Rapporteurs: Belgium and Ireland.

There had been no further comments on the note adopted in principle in Aix-en-Provence setting out the modalities for the mutual learning exercise. The note presented in Aix-en-Provence, therefore, remains unchanged as a basis for the mutual learning exercise.

9. AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING (5 DECEMBER 2008, BRUXELLES)

The following items are likely to figure on the agenda of the next meeting:

- 3rd mutual learning exercise: discussion of conclusions;
- Presentation of reports on the 4th OMC annual cycle;
- 5th OMC annual cycle: discussion on possible topics;
- Adoption of provisional Work Programme for 2009;
- Implementation of Council conclusions on scientific information in the digital age¹: presentation of a questionnaire.

¹ Adopted by the Competitiveness Council on 23 November 2007 (doc. 15362/07).

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- The Commission informed the Committee on the state of play of the work on measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of public R&D spending, undergone in cooperation between DG ECFIN and the Working Group on the Quality of Public Finance (WGQPF), on the basis of a mandate given by the ECOFIN Council in May. Delegations were of the opinion that this topic is of high interest to CREST and suggested to include it on its agenda with a view to providing useful input to this exercise.
- The German delegation requested the Commission to provide information why the recently published "Practical Guide to EU funding opportunities for Research and Innovation" does not adequately acknowledge the work done by CREST on this matter and why CREST has not been informed about its finalisation contrary to the prior agreement.
- The Dutch delegation informed the Committee that the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science published a report entitled "Report towards future oriented policy and knowledge agenda: Horizon scan report 2007" which will be distributed to all delegations.
