

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL  
RESEARCH COMMITTEE

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Crest  
Secretariat

CREST 1206/2/09  
REV 2

**NOTE**

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To:	Crest delegations
Subject:	Summary conclusions of the 325th meeting of Crest held in Brussels on 3 April 2009

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The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Director General of the Research Directorate-General of the Commission, Ms. Anneli PAULI.

**1. ADOPTION OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

The Committee adopted the provisional agenda as set out in doc. CM. 1331/09.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE  
324<sup>th</sup> MEETING**

The Committee approved the draft summary conclusions of the 324th meeting held in Brussels on 16 January 2009, set out in doc. CREST 1205/09.

**3. INFORMATION FROM THE PRESIDENCY AND THE COMMISSION**

- **Presidency**

The Presidency debriefed the Committee of the events organised by the CZ Presidency, notably the following:

- Conference on Evaluation of Impacts of European research coordination (EUFORDIA), Prague 24-25 February 2009;

- Conference on Strengthening the ERA through research infrastructures, Prague 24-25 March 2009.

The Presidency also informed the Committee that:

- the Council ("Competitiveness") at its meeting on 28-29 May 2009 is called upon to adopt conclusions on Research infrastructures, Evaluation of RTD programmes, and on the Implementation of the Ljubljana process;
- a first reading agreement will be soon finalised with the European Parliament on the Article 169 initiative regarding a Metrology research and development programme undertaken by several Member States (EMRP);
- the examination of the proposal for a European legal framework for research infrastructures was suspended at the Council pending the analysis of the question of the exemption of value added tax by the appropriate expert committee.

- **Commission**

The Commission informed the Committee that:

- Commission replies to the FP6 ex-post evaluation are expected by the end of April;
- a Communication on the progress made under the Seventh Framework Programme, that will precede the mid-term evaluation of FP7, due in 2010, is under inter-service consultation and adoption is expected to take place in the month of May;
- the terms of reference are being developed for the FP7 mid-term evaluation;
- On 23 March the Commission adopted a decision on the use of flat rates to cover subsistence costs incurred by beneficiaries during travel carried out within FP7 grants. The flat rates will be introduced into the draft 2010 work programmes, as an option.
- the Commission is establishing criteria for the calculation of average personnel costs (envisaged in the FP7 Rules for participation);
- a Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation to implement joint programming in the research area of neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer's, is foreseen to be adopted in July or September 2009;

- The 2010 Work Programmes are currently being prepared and their adoption is foreseen for July. This work involves all five work programmes (Cooperation; People; Capacities; Ideas; Euratom) and will include the initiatives foreseen in the European Economic Recovery Plan, i.e. the Public-Private Partnerships.

#### 4. EVALUATION OF PUBLIC SPENDING ON R&D

##### 4.1 FP6 ex-post evaluation:

Prof. Ernst RIETSCHER, the Chairman of the Evaluation panel presented the evaluation results.

Delegations welcomed the report and, in the discussion, referred in particular to the need, amongst others, to:

- address the decreasing industry participation in FP whilst also providing a more detailed analysis of the industry participation;
- continue simplification;
- consider a longer time-frame than one Framework Programme for the evaluations;
- improve the ex-ante design of instruments;
- address the JRC also in the overall context of FP evaluation;
- include more extensively the countries associated to the FP in the analyses;
- continue the efforts to address the SMEs, whilst noting the difficulties in this respect;
- continue the efforts towards better gender balance;
- analyse in more detail the aspects of transfer of technology and commercialisation;
- make good use of the evaluation results to feed in the preparation of next FP;
- improve the availability of data from FP.

The Commission representative recalled that the Commission response to this FP6 Ex-Post Evaluation is expected by the end of April 2009.

## 4.2 Measuring the Efficiency of Public Spending on R&D

The Commission representative (DG ECFIN) presented the draft report requested by the ECOFIN Council.

Delegations acknowledged the importance of the topic whilst also highlighting the complex nature of the problem and identifying certain methodological concerns such as how to ensure a sufficient coverage of various relevant input and output factors and how to correctly interpret the highly aggregated indicators.

The Chairperson concluded by expressing the Committee's interest to continue to be informed of developments in this field.

## 5. LJUBLJANA PROCESS – IMPLEMENTING THE ERA VISION 2020

### 5.1 Implementation strategy

The Presidency presented a draft document drawn up in follow-up to the 9 March 2009 seminar on the implementation of the ERA Vision.

Delegations highlighted, notably, the need for a concrete and operational implementation plan with clear objectives and for ensuring coordination between the Presidencies in this respect. A specific topic debated was the question of excellence and geographical balance in respect of research infrastructures in Europe, between which interdependence exists.

The Presidency invited delegations to transmit written comments by 15 April 2009 on the basis of which the Presidency, in consultation with the Trio Presidencies, would revise the document.

### 5.2 ERA targets and indicators

The Commission representative informed the Committee of the state of play in the work on targets and indicators on which first results should be achieved by early autumn in order to feed into the "post-2010 Lisbon" debate.

In the discussion, delegations highlighted the need for a limited number of targets of a political nature and the need to involve Member States in the work of developing them. At the same time, operationally measurable sub-targets for better assessment should be established.

### **5.3 ERA initiatives**

The Committee took note of the information regarding the progress in Joint Programming (CREST GPC configuration), European Partnership in International Science and Technology Cooperation (CREST SFIC configuration), the High Level Group on Human Resources (progress in the revision of the mandate and work plan) and the CREST Sub group on Knowledge Transfer (first meeting envisaged on 6 May 2009).

### **5.4 ERA Conference: aim and expected results**

The Commission representative informed delegations on the preparations of the conference (21-23 October 2009, Brussels) stressing the aim of achieving the active involvement and participation in the debates of the conference delegates who will be chosen to represent all key research stakeholders. It was acknowledged that a good coordination and complementarity should be ensured between the various ERA related conferences (SE and ES Presidencies).

## **6. THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE ERA**

### **6.1 Report of the OMC 4th cycle working group on universities**

The Chairman of the Working Group Mr Ziegele (DE) presented the report including 9 main recommendations plus some relevant findings on the national policies and instruments to foster excellence in research and a list of good practices at national level. In the discussion delegations welcomed the final report and some suggestions were made for the follow-up of peer learning activities on universities.

The Committee adopted the report of the CREST 4th OMC Working Group "Mutual learning on approaches to improve the excellence of research in universities".

## **6.2 Impact of external project-based research funding on financial management in universities**

The Chairperson of the Expert Group Ms HERLITSCHKA (AT) presented the report.

The Committee welcomed the report. In the discussion, delegations addressed the complexities linked to the financial management, such as the advantages and disadvantages of full cost and additional cost systems, as well as "costing" vs. "pricing".

The Commission is planning to organise a Work shop on this topic before summer 2009 bringing together key actors including public authorities.

## **7. INTERNATIONALISATION OF R&D**

The Chairman of the OMC Group on the Internationalisation of R&D Mr. SONNENBURG (DE) presented the main findings of the Group and the proposal for conclusions of CREST on the basis of the reports by the Group.

The Committee welcomed the work now finalised by the Group. They expressed their preference to adopt an "Opinion" of CREST and noted that work in this area would now be carried on by the CREST Strategic Forum on International S&T Cooperation (SFIC).

The Committee agreed to adopt, through written procedure, an opinion of CREST as revised in accordance with the discussion, and to make it public.

## **8. OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION**

### **8.1 Fifth OMC annual cycle**

#### Peer review of policy mix

The Committee decided to extend the peer review to Cyprus and Latvia. The Committee also agreed on the principle to extend peer review in future cycles to interested countries participating in CREST as observers.

#### Existing working group on universities

The Committee decided to postpone decision on the continuation of the work of this Group towards later on in 2009, when specific suggestions for the continuation of the peer learning activities could be discussed.

#### New topics for OMC

The Committee decided to postpone discussion and decisions until end of 2009.

## **8.2 OMC-Net**

The Commission representative informed the Committee of the Commission decision not to launch an OMC-Net call for proposals in 2010; the next possibility would therefore be in 2011.

## **9. INVOLVEMENT OF BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA AS AN OBSERVER TO CREST**

Acknowledging the Memorandum of Understanding associating Bosnia-Herzegovina to FP7 (November 2008), the Committee agreed to invite Bosnia-Herzegovina as an observer to CREST. After the Permanent Representatives Committee has been informed of this intention, the Chairman of CREST would transmit the invitation to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

## **10. AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING - PRAGUE, 11-12 JUNE 2009**

The Chairperson informed the Committee that the agenda items presently envisaged include the following:

- Ljubljana process,
- ERA "toolbox",
- Lisbon national reform programmes.

The Chairperson also informed the Committee of the suggestion to involve more closely the Presidency Trio(s) in the planning of CREST work, in order to ensure a long-term coherent approach to discussions on the ERA governance. A meeting with FR/CZ/SE/ES/BE was already organised on this. On the basis of such consultations a revised work programme for CREST will be put forward for adoption in June 2009.

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- A number of delegations raised the issue of (ex-post) **audits of FP6 projects** which they reported had recently in several cases led to requests to reimburse some of the funding (like personnel costs) received. Delegations pointed out that in that context the Commission had conducted an ex-ante desk check without those concerns having been raised, and expressed their preoccupation that this, together with the administrative burden involved, might deter some R&D organisations from the FP. In response, the Commission referred to the need to give reasonable assurance in the context of the budget discharge on a sufficiently low level of error in order to comply with the established bench marks of the Court of Auditors, in full respect of the rules regarding the implementation of the Community budget.
- The Committee discussed the question of the ideal **number of agenda items** at the meetings and the need to be sufficiently focussed to allow for in-depth discussion on priority topics whilst covering all relevant issues where timely feed-back is requested from the Committee.
- The Commission recalled that a questionnaire had been sent to Member States inquiring on the **effects of the economic crisis on their national R&D investment**. Delegations noted that this is a political issue on which it may be difficult to draw up exact replies. The Commission undertook to review its questionnaire in the light of the comments made.

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