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**NOTE**

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From : The Commission  
To : Delegations

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Subject : Conference on sustainability: a challenge for the European Research  
- Information from the Commission

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Delegations will find, in annex, an information note from the Commission services on the above-mentioned topic.

## **Conference on sustainability: a challenge for European research Information from the Commission**

A Conference entitled "Sustainable development: a challenge for European research" was organized by DG Research in collaboration with the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU in Brussels on 26 - 28 May, 2009, on the eve of the Competitiveness Council. The purpose of the Conference was to enhance the link between research and research policy, on the one hand, and sustainability on the other hand.

The contribution of research to sustainability is multi-faceted and complex, and the Conference has been designed and prepared in order to reflect this feature, mixing policy-oriented sessions organized by DG RTD, on the one hand, and research-based session organised by the Scientific Committee chaired by Professor Carlo Jaeger from Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

The Conference was opened by the Commissioner *Janez Potočnik*, and closed by the Czech and Swedish S&T Ministers *Miroslava Kopicová* and *Lars Leijonborg*.

Inter alia, the Conference was also the final milestone of the "R&D4SD exercise", initiated and launched by the European Commission in January 2009. The final report of this exercise makes recommendations on how to gear European R&D towards more sustainability (see executive summary attached). Those recommendations are fully in line with the ERA vision 2020 that "the European Research Area is to be firmly rooted in society and responsive to its needs and ambitions in pursuit of sustainable development" and form a rich basis for the discussion on the future of research policies, in order to ensure that sustainability remains a key objective of research policies in Europe.

The main outcome of the Conference can be summarised as follows:

- In the first three years of FP7's implementation, the Commission is considered to have taken very seriously the mandate to ensure that research contributes to the 7 key challenges of the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy<sup>1</sup>. Regular work programmes, Joint Technology Initiatives and Public-Private Partnerships are well in line with sustainability objectives.
- However, there is a need to intensify the efforts and ensure that sustainability remains high on the EU research agenda.
- Furthermore, it is most important to ensure that the whole European Research Area is mobilised to serve sustainable development in the EU and beyond.
- In order to deepen the articulation of research with sustainability goals and respond to the demand for better integration, a new generation of research policies will need to be developed, at all levels. These should pay more attention to the handling of interfaces of the research system within itself (between disciplines, across frontiers, basic/applied, public/private) and with the other components of European societies (with industry, policy makers and civil society).

More detailed information at: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/sd/conference/2009/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/sd/conference/2009/index_en.cfm)

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<sup>1</sup> 1. Climate change and clean energy, 2. Sustainable transport, 3. Sustainable consumption and production, 4. Conservation and management of natural resources, 5. Public health, 6. Social inclusion, demography and migration, 7. Global poverty and sustainable development challenges.