



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

## Informal Meeting of Ministers for Competitiveness (Research)

Brdo, 15 April 2008

### Draft summary by the Presidency

Ministers reaffirmed the fundamental role of ERA as a primary pillar for the Lisbon objectives and as an engine for driving the competitiveness of Europe. They also acknowledged that **Europe now needs to develop a common vision and effective governance of the European Research Area (ERA)**. Many good initiatives have been launched at national and EU levels but much more coherence and synergy are needed to create a globally competitive, knowledge-based and innovative Europe.

Looking forward, the **Member States, countries associated to the Framework Programme and the European Commission reaffirmed their willingness to share responsibility for establishing the ERA of the future and renewed their commitment**. The ministers achieved a high level of convergence between their views on the following points.

#### *Vision for the European Research Area*

1. Europe needs a **long-term vision on ERA** agreed by all Member States, with broad support from stakeholders and citizens. This vision should guide their policies and actions.
2. This long-term vision for ERA should be based on the broad Lisbon goals to make Europe a leading knowledge economy and society based on the “knowledge triangle” of research, innovation and education, as major drivers of competitiveness and quality of life.
3. The vision should include the following **features**:
  - **free movement of knowledge**, the ‘**fifth freedom**’, with excellent training and attractive career prospects for **researchers** moving and interacting freely across Europe;
  - **modern universities and research organisations** developing globally competitive poles and networks to deliver excellent science and technology throughout Europe with an optimal mix of specialisation and variety;
  - **all actors in research and private sector, including SMEs** enjoying conditions favourable to investing in research and exploiting its results, having access to world-class research infrastructures, participating in open and well-coordinated research programmes, sharing and using knowledge across sectors and borders, and developing strong links and coordinated cooperation with partners outside Europe.



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- **Citizens** benefiting from the contribution of large-scale R&D efforts to solve major societal challenges
4. The vision should be **endorsed by Council before the end of 2008** in order to quickly focus policies and actions to make it happen. The Presidency will present a first outline at the next Competitiveness Council as a basis for further development. Once adopted, the vision will be discussed, updated and deepened regularly as part of the ERA governance process set out below.

### *Governance of the European Research Area*

5. Europe needs a better **political governance** to steer and stimulate the development of ERA and to build links with other policies, such as education, innovation and cohesion policies. Ministers agreed to carry forward this effort under the name of “The Ljubljana Process”. These efforts need to be intensified as soon as possible and to be gradually consolidated. The Slovenian Presidency noted and welcomed the willingness of the **forthcoming EU Presidency trio** to work closely with each other and with the Commission in order to ensure coherent and sustained progress in the near future.
6. Governance of ERA should include the following **principles**:
- it is part of the **Lisbon Partnership for Growth and Jobs**, and is closely linked to education, innovation and other relevant policies;
  - it associates all **stakeholders** including regional authorities, universities and research organisations, civil society and business which should be fully associated with ERA governance;
  - it is aimed at realising the shared vision of ERA, for which purpose **monitoring indicators and evaluation criteria** should be defined, adopted and supported by **an effective information system**, which should be developed jointly by the Commission and the Member States and should enable overall progress towards the shared vision of ERA to be monitored and the specific ERA initiatives;
  - it is based on a **long-term partnership between the Member States and the Commission** involving relevant Community, national and joint ERA initiatives. From the early phases of planning of initiatives to their implementation, monitoring and evaluation, the partnership should be guided at the political level, taking into consideration the roles and prerogatives of EU institutions and the principle of subsidiarity;
  - it does not add complexity but on the contrary, improves the coherence and the effectiveness of ERA development



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7. It should make full use of the **Open Method of Coordination**, as called for by the March 2008 European Council to improve multilateral surveillance, building on the ERA dimension of National Reform Programmes, mutual learning and peer review;
8. ERA governance should be steered by the Competitiveness Council according to a specified cycle to be developed and agreed. It was proposed that this cycle could be developed along the following lines:
  - Relying on the information system and on the enhanced OMC for in-depth and evidence-based discussions, the informal ministerial meetings would address specific ERA developments and longer-term orientations. They would thus orient and build consensus for future Council decisions, including the research aspects of the so-called Key Issues Paper.
  - CREST would conduct the OMC, contribute to the preparation the informal ministerial discussions on ERA and advises the Commission and the Council in the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of ERA initiatives.
  - Countries associated to the Research Framework Programme should also be associated to ERA governance through CREST and the relevant informal ministerial discussions.

As a start, and at an operational level, effective governance should be established for each of the **five ERA initiatives** already planned in 2008, based on partnership between the Member States and the Commission. This partnership will be the first demonstration of the commitment of all parties to make ERA a reality.