



MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA, TECNOLOGIA E ENSINO SUPERIOR
Gabinete do Ministro

*Speech by the Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education
of Portugal*

José Mariano Gago

*at the
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Programme of the Portuguese Chairmanship of EUREKA

Dear Madam Chair,
Dear Commissioner,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to congratulate the Slovenian EUREKA Chairmanship. Thank you for your hospitality and for the quality of the organisation of this meeting. I would also like to thank the Slovenian Eureka team for the important initiatives taken during your Chairmanship. The choice of the topic “Eureka-European Proactive Response to Global Challenges in Industrial Research” was indeed timely and important.

I am sure to interpret the recognition by all member states for your very positive contribution to the progress of Eureka. Thank you! I warmly thank the Slovenian government as well as the Slovenian chairs and representatives and their support team. You deserve our applause!

Portugal was a founding member of the intergovernmental initiative EUREKA. We are proud of having chaired EUREKA in 1998 – 1999 and of having launched one of the very first industrial R&D European initiatives in China, under the name of EUREKA - ASIA.

This is therefore the second time Portugal is given the task of chairing the Initiative on your behalf. We are honoured to serve again EUREKA in this capacity. We wish to stimulate debate, to strengthen the spirit of mutual



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cooperation among Eureka member states and to reinforce the involvement of all stakeholders in our activities.

EUREKA has now 23 years of existence and has generated thousands of projects, bringing together at present 38 full members – I warmly welcome the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as a new member.

EUREKA was created with the ambition to promoting European's industry competitiveness, especially of SMEs, by fostering trans-national cooperation in near market R&D, using a flexible and dynamic model.

Those were the Hannover objectives: “To raise, through closer cooperation among enterprises and research institutes in the field of advanced technologies, the productivity and competitiveness of Europe's industries and national economies on the world market... To enable Europe to master and exploit the technologies that are important for its future, and to build up its capability in crucial areas.”

However, twenty one years later, the 2006 Aho Report to the EU still recommends that “a Pact for Research and Innovation is needed to drive the agenda for an Innovative Europe.”

During the Portuguese presidency of the EU, in December 2007, EU Council Conclusions on the Future of S&T in Europe were approved and endorsed by the European Summit. In their Conclusions Ministers agreed that faster progress is more than ever necessary in order to respond to:

- the increased international competition, including for qualified human resources for R&D, and new opportunities brought by the globalisation of economic and knowledge flows;
- the increasing complexity and scale of the economic, social and environmental challenges affecting society;
- the need of business to operate in an environment of 'open innovation' where connections with each other and with public research institutions are at the core of value creation;
- the growing importance of the freedom of knowledge and of knowledge circulation, notably knowledge-sharing between public research and industry as well as public at large.



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How can EUREKA contribute to these major objectives?

We firmly believe that there is an urgent need for renewing its political vision and to bringing in a new dynamism to EUREKA.

EUREKA should not be let to slowly fade away as a memory from the past.

EUREKA was a courageous and innovative political initiative launched to stimulate innovation through research at international level, to accelerate globalization and to help Europe to grasp its benefits. It was not designed as another bureaucratic instrument, where top-down priorities are set a priori to be hopefully followed by the real players, industry and researchers. Instead, a bottom-up approach was firmly established by EUREKA in conjunction with a spirit of flexibility and national responsibility.

The number of Eureka projects rose from the very first 10 in 1985 to 99 new projects and 2 Umbrellas in 1986, and to the current 800 to 900 reported running projects.

A large network of EUREKA countries was established beyond traditional political boundaries. This is a clear success upon which a global strategy of stimulating R&D collaboration among firms at world level must now be agreed upon by EUREKA governments. We believe that such a debate cannot be postponed. A clear political answer to those countries approaching us must be developed urgently, based upon a clear vision of long term mutual benefits and on the responsibility by the firms themselves for their own contractual arrangements.

Yes, EUREKA was a success story. But how shall we renew the Initiative in order to remain so?

Difficult questions cannot be avoided anymore. EUREKA is a political Initiative and its future depends upon political, not administrative decisions. This is not a platform for bureaucratic planners or red tape developers. The future of EUREKA is first of all a challenge for EUREKA governments.

Is the EUREKA label a competitive advantage for innovative firms and for new innovative products? How attractive is it to the most competitive



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companies and R&D institutions? How can the EUREKA label be reinvented to become a world wide symbol of innovation?

EUREKA is at a cross roads.

This is a time for careful assessment and for firm and prompt political decisions.

The Portuguese chairmanship wishes to contribute to the success and strengthening of EUREKA as a major tool to promote research and innovation, strengthening the bottom-up, open and flexible nature of the network.

We will therefore promote, with your help, not only a policy of continuity but also those actions needed to the development of a common vision for a renewed EUREKA.

Our proposal is to focus on four main directions:

1. Promoting a policy of increased international cooperation by looking proactively for partnerships with the world at large.

The external dimension of EUREKA should, in our view, be further developed and supported. Approaching new partners from regions such as the Southern Mediterranean and the Gulf, Asia and America is both a necessity and an opportunity we cannot ignore. New networks for R&D and advanced training are emerging between European and non-European companies, research institutions and Universities. Those are flexible contractual arrangements sharing with EUREKA the spirit of autonomy and initiative of their participant stakeholders and the diversity of support schemes from national authorities and other funding sources. EUREKA might become one of the best political tools that Europe can contribute to the development of those novel R&D networks that are shaping our future.

2. Seeking increased cooperation with other intra-European mechanisms for R&D support. Relations with programmes and projects of the European Commission such as COST, the JTIs and the ERA – NETs should also be pursued in order to explore synergies and new opportunities.



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EUREKA spans a distinct and larger set of countries than the EU. Its role as a truly independent platform must be preserved by all means. However, synergies between EUREKA and EU policies and programmes should be regarded as fundamental both for EUREKA and for the EU. Combining member states' national policies with EUREKA as well as with increasingly diverse, open and global EU Framework Programmes for R&D is a challenge we all know well. The EUROSTARS Programme will certainly add a new dimension to this challenge that we hope will be beneficial to all.

3. Adding value to the EUREKA label, reinforcing a communication strategy that increases recognition of EUREKA as associated to successful projects that have reached the market with innovative products and services. The Portuguese chair will suggest the organisation of an exhibition of project results in conjunction with a high level event for the delivery of EUREKA Awards.

4. Strengthening mechanisms for the generation of projects, improving relations within the Network and its clusters in order to achieve even better results, and promoting, as far as possible, voluntary synchronization of evaluation and funding.

It is our understanding that one of the main aims of the EUREKA Initiative is the generation of new and excellent projects. New collaborative projects leading to the creation of innovative products and services should be a constant priority.

New decisive projects in Energy – New, Clean and Renewable sources of Energy – should be a common concern of EUREKA as a responsible global partner.

A Technology Mission of European enterprises and research institutions to Asia is being considered and will be proposed to the Eureka network. We are open to a frank and productive dialogue with all member states in order to assess other opportunities.

A set of brokerage events is being prepared. The first one, on Moulds and Dies innovative products and processes will take place in October at Marina Grande, north of Lisbon, one of the main regional hubs of mould industries in Europe.



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Portugal will hold in Lisbon the next Ministerial Conference, in June 2009. Furthermore we intend to suggest to the Portuguese Parliament the organisation of the Inter - parliamentary Conference in 2009.

Administrative meetings should be reduced to a minimum. We will ask the Secretariat to streamline its activities on behalf of the main objectives of EUREKA. We ask for greater coordination and optimisation, and for a clear departure from the administrative and bureaucratic natural tendency to contribute to the second law of thermodynamics by promoting continuously a greater multiplicity of meetings and structures, decreasing the clarity and focus of the organisation and reaching safely higher levels of entropy. With the help of the Secretariat and with your political support we will try to contribute to the efficiency and simplicity of EUREKA.

The Portuguese EUREKA team is committed to working closely with all EUREKA partners in order to promote a renewed and stronger EUREKA.

We will all be working together. I am looking forward for your ideas, proposals and projects.

We will be chairing EUREKA on your behalf. Thank you very much in advance for all your support!

José Mariano Gago