

EU Policies/ Competitiveness /Science & Technology

Building the future of science and research in Europe

Science and research are central for knowledge societies and economies. At the time when the European Commission launches the Green Paper on the European Research Area, the Presidency has decided to convoke a major debate on the future of science and technology policy in Europe. Joint action at the national and international level of all relevant stakeholders is critical for the development of science and technology in Europe.

Governments and European institutions, regions, national funding agencies, large European scientific laboratories, the scientific community, industry, the banking sector, universities and research institutions need to be partners, to ensure alliances and create collaborative action that can promote European scientific development.

It is necessary to increase public and private investment in research and development, as well as develop policies to promote qualified human resources in science and technology. The situation, however, differs from country to country.

The Presidency wants to attribute a new impetus to the Lisbon Strategy in science and technology. The Lisbon Strategy defined collective targets in science and technology but the main responsibility of implementing them now resides with national policies and strategies. We believe that the European political process should stimulate and widen the social base of support in each Member State. More ambitious targets in science and technology in each Member State can be stimulated by the agreement on European objectives.

PRESIDENCY PRIORITIES

I) Investment in R&D, Human Resources in S&T

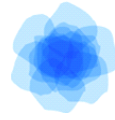
Increase public and private investment in R&D

The Presidency wants to stimulate the development of policies and programmes which will increase public and private investment in R&D.

Overall, the European Union has not reached its target of 1% public and 2% private investment in R&D, as defined at the Barcelona Summit.

Nevertheless, many countries have succeeded to increase public investment in R&D, as well as renovate and diversify their science policy instruments. Europe is undergoing a transformation of its scientific and academic institutions, as well as the forms of collaboration with industry and policy administrations. Despite the changing environment, the exchange of experiences and mutual learning between national governments is still scarce, and collaboration between governments, R&D institutions and scientific community bodies is just starting.

Developing better conditions that can lead to the increase of private investment in R&D is a question of strategic European importance as well as a challenge for each Member State.



Although recognising the efforts developed by the European Commission through the 7th Framework Programme in RTD, we should highlight the dimension and seriousness of this challenge in a context of intensive worldwide competition for the location of business and entrepreneurial R&D centres.

More Human Resources in Science & Technology

Europe needs more scientists and more scientific jobs. The goals identified by the Lisbon Strategy can not be attained without highly qualified human resources. The expansion of scientific jobs in Europe and of its potential does not fulfil the ambitions or the objectives defined by the Lisbon Strategy. In some countries, the capacity to attract new generations to study scientific and technical subjects is still reduced. In other countries, the participation of women in the scientific potential is limited due to the context of adverse administrative structures and social policies. The balance between the capacity to attract students and researchers to Europe, and the departure of European trained researchers to other continents, particularly to the USA, does not reflect the dynamism expected from EU coordinated policies. Finally, in spite of significant progress achieved in the last years, impediments to mobility still persist in many countries and organisations.

An exchange of national experience and their convergence with EU objectives is essential for effective policy performance. The definition of common political objectives in the field of human resources in science & technology has become increasingly necessary.

II Presidency priorities: A renewed political agenda

Following the approval of the 7th Framework Programme, and coinciding with the current public debate on the European Research Area (ERA), a new opportunity is open for the rekindling of the European science policy agenda.

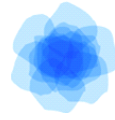
Recognising that significant work in progress is underway on the development of a research infrastructure policy, the European Institute of Technology, Intellectual Property, and the accomplishment of the Joint Technology Initiatives, the Presidency would like to propose the following areas for action:

European Policy on Publishing and Scientific & Technical Information

Science depends on the effective and broad access to scientific results by researchers. The expansion of the internet has created unprecedented possibilities for dissemination, sharing of information, and knowledge transfer. The competitiveness of science produced in Europe also depends on the broader possibilities of knowledge-sharing and information.

Based on the work produced by the Commission (“Scientific information in the digital era: access, dissemination and preservation”), the Presidency will encourage a debate with all interested stakeholders on a European policy for publishing and scientific and technical information such as digital scientific libraries. Such debate must promote and ensure mutual trust is established.

A European endeavour on Nanosciences & Nanotechnologies



At a time when the Commission is preparing its mid-term report on the European strategy for Nanosciences and Nanotechnologies, the Presidency will highlight this area.

Some months ago, in a joint initiative, Portugal and Spain created the International Iberian Nanotechnology Institute in Braga, in the north of Portugal. This is the most recent intergovernmental European scientific organisation. This new International Laboratory is open to participation from other countries and is seen as a large-scale structure that can attract resources worldwide and highlight the importance of research in this area.

The Reform and Modernisation of Universities

Universities constitute one of the most important strategic resources of knowledge-based societies. The Presidency aims to contribute to the reform of the modernisation of higher education in Europe. In particular, the Presidency will focus on the context of advanced research and training networks, including the opening up, diversification, and internationalisation of Universities.

A new impetus to basic research, in the frontier of knowledge

The creation of the European Research Council (ERC) implied the birth of a new powerful, strategic instrument for science policy at the EU level. The leadership competencies of the European scientific community in the creation and definition of the ERC, combined with the independence of this new body, constitutes a precious asset for the future of science in Europe, which needs to be stimulated. This will contribute to the renewal of the scientific research agenda in the frontier of knowledge, and to the confirmation of European scientific hubs, which are able to attract the best human resources at a global scale.

Symbolically, the first event of the Portuguese Presidency in the area of Science & Technology will be the meeting of the ERC Scientific Council accompanied by a debate with the scientific community projecting ERC's activities.