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Subject : Council Conclusions on "European Research Infrastructures and their regional dimension"

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Delegations will find attached the Council Conclusions on "European Research infrastructures and their regional dimension" as adopted on the Competitiveness Council on 30 May 2008.

**Council Conclusions on  
European Research Infrastructures and their regional dimension**

RECALLING the decision No 1982/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013)<sup>1</sup>; Council Decision on the "Capacities" Specific Programme<sup>2</sup> of 19 December 2006; Council conclusions on "Research infrastructures in the European Research Area"<sup>3</sup> of 22 May 2007; Council conclusions on the "Future of Science and Technology in Europe"<sup>4</sup> of 23 November 2007; the Key Issues Paper of the Competitiveness Council to the Spring 2008 European Council<sup>5</sup>; and the Commission communication "Competitive European regions through Research and Innovation" of 16 August 2007.<sup>6</sup>

RECALLING the European Council held on 13 and 14 March 2008, which concluded that efforts towards improving the framework conditions for innovation should be better coordinated, including through improved science-industry linkages and world-class innovation clusters and development of regional clusters and networks, urging the Member States and the Community to make swift progress on priority actions including the strengthening of research infrastructure of pan-European interest, scientific e-infrastructure and launching a new generation of world-class research facilities;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 412, 30.12.2006, pp. 1-41

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 54, 22.2.2007, pp. 101-125.

<sup>3</sup> Doc. 10055/1/07.

<sup>4</sup> Doc. 14693/07.

<sup>5</sup> Doc. 6933/08.

<sup>6</sup> Doc. 12511/07.

RECALLING the guidelines document and its recommendations for a better coordinated use of the Research Framework programme and the Structural Funds to support R&D adopted by CREST on 7 May 2007<sup>7</sup> and subsequent Council conclusions on "More efficient support to research and innovation: Coordinating the use of the Research Framework Programme and the Structural Funds"<sup>8</sup> of 25 June 2007;

HIGHLIGHTING the importance of new models and best practices of research infrastructure funding such as those presented at the conference "Research Infrastructures and their Structuring Dimension within the European Research Area" in March 2008 in Brdo, Slovenia, which can result in increased funding of research infrastructures and optimisation of the use of available funds.

The Council

1. **EMPHASISES** that excellent research infrastructures play a key role in the development of the European Research Area (ERA) by promoting excellence in science, enabling globally competitive basic and applied research, and furthermore:
  - contribute to **dynamic and sustainable regional development, economic growth and social benefits** by strengthening the existing research and educational capacity, also in terms of human resources by attracting best and new researchers as well as attracting European researchers to reintegrate after employment abroad,
  - act as catalysts for innovation and collaboration and for the achievement of knowledge growth as set out in the Lisbon strategy, and can be attractive for **high-tech companies** as they strengthen the **innovative potential** in regions,
  - are important for combining internal and external sources of knowledge promoting **open innovation** which creates value and contributes to the development of **innovative products and services**.

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<sup>7</sup> Doc. 1203/07.

<sup>8</sup> Doc. 11262/07.

2. **ACKNOWLEDGES** a clear and strong commitment of the Commission and Member States to further develop research infrastructures on the basis of , inter alia, the (updated) **ESFRI roadmap** and **national roadmaps and/or programmes** and appropriate legal framework, in a coordinated manner.
3. **EMPHASISES** the essential role of **e-infrastructures** as an integrating mechanism between Member States, regions as well as different scientific disciplines, also contributing to overcoming digital divides.
4. **RECOGNISES** the need to increase the investment in research infrastructures and the need to **combine in the most efficient way** all available public and private resources (Member States, industry, EIB, Structural Funds, FP7, CIP etc.) to reinforce research infrastructures; therefore **WELCOMES** the preparation by the Commission of "A practical guide to EU funding opportunities for research, development and innovation: Synergies in funding between the 7th Framework Programme for Research, Competitiveness & Innovation programme and Structural Funds" to enable, inter alia, the construction of research infrastructures.
5. **CALLS ON** the Commission to enhance, as far as possible, the **compatibility of accounting and reporting rules for Community funding** from these programmes in order to further facilitate their combined use for research purposes, as well as to ease their combination with national, regional and local sources of funding; and launch preparatory work with Member States concerning upcoming programmes.
6. **RECOGNISES** the need for **more synergy** between research, educational and cohesion policies, as well as between support to existing and new facilities, in order to increase opportunities for excellence throughout ERA.

7. **CONSIDERS** that current efforts at regional, national and European levels for reinforcing research infrastructures of European interest need to be strengthened and further developed; to this effect, **strategic planning and prioritisation**, on the basis of scientific excellence, is essential in creating research and innovation friendly systems and environments; these should be implemented through cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation (not only at EU level) addressing issues of common interest.
8. **RECOGNISING** that regions are important drivers leading to the development of a knowledge based society and that there is a need for capacity building throughout Europe; hence, that efforts must be continued in a coordinated manner, involving the Commission and Member States, to increase the **capacity of regions** across Europe to access, use, construct and operate modern research infrastructures.
9. **INVITES** therefore Member States and regions to continue developing, among others, **“regional partner facilities”** as a useful way of capacity building of all regions in Europe resulting in a balanced development of the ERA; and **INVITES** the Commission to facilitate these efforts with appropriate means.
10. **CALLS UPON** all stakeholders to discuss the report of the ERA expert group on research infrastructures, presented at the conference in Brdo, highlighting the **vision for the future** and increased role of the Community in further supporting research infrastructures.

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