

Informal Meeting of Competitiveness Ministers *"Towards the Vision 2020"*

Prague, Sunday 3 – Monday 4 May 2009

Connected and Operational Knowledge Triangle - a precondition for the achievement of Vision 2020

European cooperation within the "knowledge triangle" needs to be developed to its full potential. The coordination of efforts by its actors leads to more effective and efficient investments in education, research and development, and innovation. In the context of the Ljubljana process, there is a need to coordinate national investments in the activities leading to innovations, and to bring a more coherent approach to Europe.

To ensure the full functionality of the knowledge triangle, smooth transfer of information and knowledge has to be guaranteed. Once this goal is achieved, every financial contribution or policy initiative in one area will have a leverage effect on the two remaining areas.

As we are facing the economic crisis, less private investments in education, research and development, and innovation are expected. In order to minimize the negative effects of the current downturn, it is essential to focus on maximum efficiency in R&D spending as well as on higher allocations by public sector.

The knowledge triangle should be applied on concrete topics and should be perceived as a tool for tackling social and competitiveness issues.

In June 2008, the Czech Presidency asked the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) for an exploratory opinion on "Research and development in support of competitiveness". This opinion is supposed to be approved by the plenary session of the EESC on 13 May 2009, and the

Presidency used the draft opinion as an important input for the discussion of the Ministers at the Informal Competitiveness Council.

One of the chapters of the draft opinion is dedicated to the knowledge triangle. The Committee considers the involvement of all knowledge triangle actors in the whole process substantial. Therefore, a fundamental objective would be to obtain a high level of cooperation between public and private actors, academia and industry. According to the draft opinion, the main inhibitors in the innovation process are the low stimulation of young people in taking up research careers, the research institutions being insufficiently in touch with the industry's economic requirements, and industry not necessarily taking up innovation opportunities. These inhibitors could also arise from the fact that entrepreneurship in Europe is not stimulated enough within its education culture. As the draft opinion suggests, this results in researchers publishing papers rather than searching innovation and business opportunities. The industrial culture, on the other hand, being not flexible enough, is lacking the aspiration for change, and proactive creativity.

Questions for Ministers:

- What measures and incentives are applied in your R&D policies to interlink the actors of the knowledge triangle?
- Effective communication between the actors of the knowledge triangle is the first step to a better coordination of policies. What platform or body for such a communication do you have in your country, as a prerequisite of coordinated policy making?
- How are the stakeholders involved in the R&D policy making process?