



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on the Research Infrastructures and the regional dimension of the European Research Area (ERA)

***2945th COMPETITIVENESS
(Internal market, Industry and Research)
Council meeting
Brussels, 29 May 2009***

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"RECALLING

- the Presidency conclusions on the "future European policy to support research" of 26 November 2004¹;
- the green paper entitled "European Research Area: New Perspectives" adopted by the Commission on 4 April 2007²;
- the Council conclusions on "Research Infrastructures in the European Research Area" of 22 May 2007³;
- the Council conclusions on the Commission communication entitled "A European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET Plan)" of 28 February 2008⁴;
- the Council conclusions on "European Research Infrastructures and their regional dimension" of 30 May 2008⁵;

¹ Doc. 14687/04.
² Doc. 8322/07 + ADD 1.
³ Doc. 10055/1/07.
⁴ Doc. 6326/1/08.
⁵ Doc. 10220/08.

P R E S S

- the Council conclusions on the definition of a "2020 Vision for the European Research Area" of 2 December 2008⁶;
- the European Councils of 11 and 12 December 2008 and of 19 and 20 March 2009⁷;

The Council

1. EMPHASISES that Europe needs to maintain the support for R&D and innovation in the current economic crisis and that in particular national investments in the pan-European research infrastructures should be accelerated, as set out in the European Economic Recovery Plan. This will not only ensure short- and long-term benefits for European competitiveness but also stimulate further development of the ERA and help realise the "fifth freedom" - free movement of knowledge.
2. RECOGNISES the importance of excellent research infrastructures, single-sited and distributed, in promoting the development of the knowledge triangle and fostering the socio-economic development and competitiveness of Europe and its regions, as highlighted at the conference "Research Infrastructures and the Regional Dimension of the ERA" held in Prague on 24 and 25 March 2009.
3. WELCOMES the work of the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) on the updated Roadmap 2008, which has acted as a catalyst for national roadmaps and/or programmes for research infrastructures in many cases, and CALLS on the Member States to amplify their efforts to bring about, where appropriate, its implementation within a realistic time frame.
4. ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of research infrastructures, in particular Regional Partner Facilities, for a more balanced development of the ERA and brain circulation throughout Europe, thereby promoting European cohesion. In this context, REITERATES the significance of the principle of excellence and an effective access of the European research community to the top research facilities;
5. EMPHASISES the importance of research infrastructures for the development of human resources in research and development, with special benefits for intersectoral mobility and the involvement of industry in the process of educating researchers, and INVITES the Member States to engage in the development of special training activities with a view to bringing together universities, research performing organisations, research infrastructures and industry.

⁶ Doc. 16767/08.

⁷ Doc. 17271/1/09 REV1.

6. WELCOMES the Commission communication entitled "ICT infrastructures for e-Science"⁸, which puts emphasis on the growing importance of e-Infrastructures for research excellence, innovation and efficient operation of research infrastructures, and UNDERLINES that e-Infrastructures are a key factor in overcoming fragmentation and the digital divide in Europe, with their potential to harness the collective power of European scientific resources regardless of their geographical location.
7. RECOGNIZING, in this context, the important role of e-Infrastructures and e-science for the development of the future of the ERA and the need to further examine the issue in due course, and CALLS on the Commission to pursue the sustainability, global connectivity, interoperability and unimpeded use of pan-European e-Infrastructures, and on the Member States to consider the role of e-Infrastructures in their national roadmaps and/or programmes for research infrastructures.
8. INVITES the Member States and the Commission, in consultation with ESFRI, where appropriate, to:
 - promote further use of existing financial tools, in particular the Structural Funds and EIB instruments for the construction, upgrading or maintenance of research infrastructures, including Regional Partner Facilities;
 - in this context, encourage the development of research infrastructures, including the distribution, in a way to facilitate balanced implementation of ERA, while preserving the principle of scientific excellence and ensuring effective access;
 - establish and strengthen links between national and pan-European research infrastructures;
 - analyse the socio-economic returns and cost effectiveness of research infrastructures for the regions hosting them and Europe as a whole, along with the identification of possible obstacles to the increased use of Structural Funds.
9. INVITES the Member States, in consultation with ESFRI, to:
 - develop, in particular, common set of criteria which may be used to assess the efficiency of research infrastructures at European level;
 - develop relevant voluntary criteria for the assessment of bids before the site selection of large pan-European research infrastructures."

⁸ Doc. 7432/09.