

Check against delivery!



Commissioner Janez POTOČNIK

*Meeting of industrial leaders of
European Technology Platforms*

*Brussels, Berlaymont building
Robert Schuman room*

30 September 2008

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for coming here today for this, our ninth European Technology Platform leaders' seminar. I said back in December 2007, the last time we met, that my attendance at these events was a mark of my regard for the work that you do. This is as true now as it was then.

William Pollard, the American historian said: "If you want people to listen, you have to have a platform to speak from and that is provided from the excellence in what you do and developing trust and respect." ETPs are now listened to more than ever, because of their excellent work, reputation and contribution. They have built their own platform from which to speak. I would like now to use *this* platform to pledge my continuing personal support.

ETPs are worth supporting because they are both unique and exceptional. **Unique**, because no other fora exist for developing and updating long-term European-level research agendas in key industrial areas; **exceptional** because they involve both research organisations and other important stakeholders with industry.

This is my view of course, but I'm very pleased to tell you that the findings of our external evaluation – which were made public just a few weeks ago – provide the evidence to back up this view.

The results show that since the launch of the ETP idea in 2003, you have achieved a lot. Here is a long, but not exhaustive list:

- the development of important Strategic Research Agendas, which encourage better coordination in research effort and help to articulate the views of industry, academia, civil society and others on the needs and challenges in key technology areas at European level;
- ETPs have inspired and designed some of the main priorities of FP7 and continue to contribute to the development of its annual work programme;
- Some have even developed into or spun off public private partnerships such as JTIs and Industrial Initiatives such as SET (Strategic Energy Technology) Plan. Here I want to stress the importance we attach to ETPs as a strong symbol of the Commission's commitment to giving industry a leading role in developing the direction of research and to explore different forms of public-private partnership. A commitment which is now bearing fruit in the form of Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs), the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and other forms of industrial initiatives;
- ETPs have provided a good basis for the interaction between the Commission and national and regional research initiatives through the operation of mirror groups and national platforms;
- In a number of cases, ETPs have come together and coordinated their efforts to develop a common approach to joint challenges;
- A number have actually gone beyond research and contributed to the design of the Lead Market Initiative, the production of standards, reviews of regulatory frameworks, the strengthening of international research cooperation; and many have been active in research policy debates including the ERA Green paper consultation.

The survey has also identified some areas where we might consider changing the way in which ETPs work. For example, although most ETPs successfully involve and represent a broad range of EU-wide stakeholders, in their activities, civil society interests (for example NGOs) and the public have a relatively small presence or representation in relation to the strong societal dimension of some of the issues addressed in many ETPs Strategic Research Agendas. Our 2008 assessment showed that less than a third of the ETPs have NGOs as members and only two in proportion over 1%.

Here I think, we could do better. It is correct that ETPs are industry-led, but they must also be open and inclusive to a broad range of other stakeholders, from civil society representatives to SMEs and of course other new industrial members. ETPs might also improve in terms of their transparency. By this I mean the way in which they communicate with their target audience, including the general public, the right information about their status and activities. I think you, as single ETP or groups of ETPs need to identify which specific measures could be taken to address this issue, if necessary with the help of Commission services.

As I have already said, the survey has been an opportunity for mutual learning, the identification of best practice, suggestions for addressing identified weaknesses, making platforms stronger as well as enabling them to contribute further to our plans to move the ERA forward.

And despite my description of what might be described as 'minor weaknesses', no one can deny the fact that overall, ETPs have made **a remarkable contribution** to overcoming fragmentation, by concentrating research effort and helping to realise the European Research Area. It is clear too that ETPs have contributed to more, and **better, R&D investment**. When I speak to research Ministers and their ministries, national programme managers, research councils and institutions I am frequently told about the importance of ETP visions and SRA and the impact they have by structuring the development of national research programmes and priorities. Don't just take my word for it. The 2007 Scoreboard showed that the top 1000 EU companies increased their R&D investment by 7.4%, but the 1000 top non-EU companies increased it by 11.1%. Newest data seem to indicate that this gap is starting to close, ie EU investment growth is rising while non-EU investment growth is falling compared to last years data. You are helping to close this gap in growth rates.

Do I need to go on? Take a moment to congratulate yourself on your achievements.

But now we need to ask ourselves some questions – what do the survey results mean to you as ETP leaders? How might, or should ETPs evolve to anticipate, meet and take advantage of them? Do you need, consequently, to change your role and way of functioning? Evolution is an emotive subject but even creationists can't argue about the necessity for change in this dynamic and global world of ours.

This is, of course, one of the reasons why we are here today and I look forward to hearing the outcomes of the session where you will discuss the way ahead for ETPs. I am always receptive to good ideas, especially those which show how ETPs can help support the realisation of the ERA, or how activities at EU, national and regional level can be better integrated and coordinated in support of the implementation of the SRAs. Don't be limited by these two suggestion, though, I'm open to what you have to say.

Turning now to the ERA and the role for ETPs in helping us take it forward, I would like to take some time to describe how far we have come and what might constitute our longer term vision.

We want a European Research Area as a beacon of excellent, world-class research. Our 'nirvana list' would be:

- The free movement of knowledge, the 'fifth freedom', with excellent training and attractive career prospects for researchers moving and interacting freely across Europe;
- modern universities and research organisations developing globally competitive poles and networks to deliver excellent science and technology throughout Europe with an optimal mix of specialisation and variety;
- favourable conditions for all actors in research and the private sector, including SMEs, for investing in research and exploiting its results, having access to world-class research infrastructures (including those of pan-European interest identified in the ESFRI roadmap), participating in open and well-coordinated research programmes, sharing and using knowledge across sectors and borders, and developing strong links and coordinated cooperation with partners outside Europe;
- benefits for Europeans from the contribution of large-scale R&D efforts to solve the major societal challenges – what are now commonly called the 'grand' challenges of energy supply, food safety and security, climate change - to name but a few.

This year, I'm happy to announce that we have now launched all five of our new targeted initiatives with which we hope to further shape and mobilise the ERA to achieve the goals in that list. These are:

- The development of joint public research programmes – aimed at Member State level;
- Developing researchers' mobility and career development;
- Facilitating the building and the operation of pan-European research infrastructures;
- The unveiling of a strategy for international science and technology (S&T) cooperation; and
- A code of practice on management of Intellectual Property Rights in Public Research Organisations.

Of course, simply launching a new raft of initiatives and standing back to watch what they do would achieve nothing but the waste of an awful lot of time, thought and money. We now would like you to play your part again by telling us what your views are on how these five initiatives are likely to affect your sector, how they might be better tuned to benefit you and how you can contribute to their success.

You will be given your opportunity to do this this afternoon in the session led by James Gavigan and I strongly urge you to take this opportunity to give us your views. We won't know what you want, unless you tell us!

But what of the longer term future?

There is a date, not so far over the horizon which has totemic significance and which is nearly upon us: 2010, the date by which we have committed ourselves to deliver those famous statistical milestones set out under the Lisbon Strategy.

But beyond this, we can see the research challenges, some of which existed before Lisbon and some which have pushed themselves up the pecking order since Lisbon. They are as broad ranging as a set of global issues can be, and include, the food crisis, climate change and the need for alternative energy sources, the transformation into a knowledge society, and the impact of our ageing society.

What are they to us and to the ERA? They are new business opportunities, new socio-technological agendas and new demands on policy makers. Against this backdrop, we look forward to the strategic policies emerging from *Vision 2020* of the European Research Area, which will be published before the end of 2008 during the French Presidency.

Vision 2020 is a Member State initiative emerging from the so-called *Ljubljana Process*. This aims to reinforce the European Research Area further. *Vision 2020* – we hope – will contribute to the improvement of political governance to steer and stimulate the development of the ERA and to build links with other policies, such as those concerned with education, innovation and cohesion. What *Vision 2020* starts under the French Presidency, will certainly be taken up next year under the Czech and Swedish presidencies.

Fortunately for us Session Three this afternoon features a presentation by Laure Reinhart, a representative of the French Presidency, who will be able to give us an update on the progress of developing this vision – after that, I'm sure we will have 20-20 vision about vision 2020.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

For my closing remarks, let me return to the ETP survey. Over 90% of the nearly 950 respondents to the evaluators' survey of your members and stakeholders said that they would, given their experience of ETPs involvement so far, gladly renew their membership. What greater endorsement could there be for all of your hard work.

Let me conclude by congratulating you as ETPs for your excellence in what you do. Long may it continue.

The ETP evaluation study can be downloaded from
http://cordis.europa.eu/technology-platforms/home_en.html