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European Commission adopts Code of Conduct for Responsible Nanosciences and Nanotechnologies Research

Europe is in the vanguard of the emerging field of nanosciences and nanotechnologies (N&N), a developing field of science with the potential for major positive impact economically, socially and environmentally. Nevertheless, knowledge gaps remain about the impact of these technologies on human health and the environment, as well as issues relating to ethics and the respect of fundamental rights. This is why the Commission is today recommending to the Member States to adopt a Code of Conduct to govern research in this field. Based around 7 general principles covering issues such as sustainability, precaution, inclusiveness and accountability, the Code of Conduct invites Member States to take concrete action, involving universities, research institutes and companies, for the safe development and use of nanotechnologies.

"Nanotechnologies and nanosciences could very well be the next revolution in enabling technologies, and Europe has a good track record in their development" said European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik. "Part of our strength is in the attention we are giving to their responsible development and use. The Code of Conduct is a tool developed by the Commission, after consulting with the public, that will make it very simple to address the legitimate concerns that can arise regarding nanotechnologies."

The European Commission launched a consultation on the Code of Conduct in July 2007 (see [IP/07/1140](#)). On the basis of the replies received, today's text was drawn up. It is very much in line with the objective of promoting integrated safe and responsible nanosciences and nanotechnologies that lies at the heart of the 2005 Nanotechnologies Action Plan (see [IP/07/1321](#) if any).

The 7 principles are:

Meaning: N&N research activities should be comprehensible to the public. They should respect fundamental rights and be conducted in the interest of the well-being of individuals and society in their design, implementation, dissemination and use.

Sustainability: N&N research activities should be safe, ethical and contribute to sustainable development. They should not harm or threaten people, animals, plants or the environment, at present or in the future.

Precaution: N&N research activities should be conducted in accordance with the precautionary principle, anticipating potential environmental, health and safety impacts of N&N outcomes and taking due precautions, proportional to the level of protection, while encouraging progress for the benefit of society and the environment.

Inclusiveness: Governance of N&N research activities should be guided by the principles of openness to all stakeholders, transparency and respect for the legitimate right of access to information. It should allow the participation in decision-making processes of all stakeholders involved in or concerned by N&N research activities.

Excellence: N&N research activities should meet the best scientific standards, including integrity of research and good laboratory practices.

Innovation: Governance of N&N research activities should encourage maximum creativity, flexibility and planning ability for innovation and growth.

Accountability: Researchers and research organisations should remain accountable for the social, environmental and human health impacts of their work.

The Code of conduct also provides guidelines that implement these 7 principles under:

- good governance of research
- due respect of precaution
- dissemination and monitoring of the Code of Conduct.

For more information on nanotechnologies in Europe, see [IP/07/1738](#)