The Research Promotion Foundation (RPF) was established by the Republic of Cyprus in 1996, to serve as the national organisation for the promotion of scientific and technological research in Cyprus. The Foundation is not a governmental institution but is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors, currently chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Planning Bureau.

The Foundation is fully supported by the Government and its resources are derived mostly from the Government.

The RPF has over the years developed a wide range of activities which fall into two broad categories: (a) the design, launching, funding and monitoring of national research funding Programmes, and (b) the promotion of the participation of Cypriot researchers in European Research Programmes and International Organisations (EU Framework Programmes, COST, INTAS, European Science Foundation - ESF, EUREKA, Joint Research Centre - JRC, Bilateral Agreements on R&D etc.).

In this context, the Foundation would like to provide the following feedback regarding selected parts of the Green Paper “The European Research Area: New Perspectives”.

**Elements of the European Research Area Vision (Q1-3)**

The RPF is a strong supporter of the ERA vision as this has been put forward by the European Commission. The six main elements identified in the Green Paper are indeed essential if the ERA is to materialise as was initially conceived.

The Foundation believes that the European Union *should encourage all member and associated states in developing the necessary policies* that would create a favourable environment for the development and operation of the ERA, and *should itself play a key role in the development and coordination of such actions*. Furthermore, the
Foundation believes that \textit{the role of the European Commission as the coordinator and facilitator of the European research policy should be emphasised.}

\textbf{Realising a Single Labour Market for Researchers (Q4-10)}

One of the most important aspects of the development of the ERA is the creation of a favourable environment for researchers across Europe. In this context, the RPF has been actively involved in a number of European initiatives specifically aimed at researchers such as the creation of the Cyprus Mobility Centre and Portal, the promotion of the “European Charter for Researchers” and the “Code of Conduct for their Recruitment” in Cyprus, the organisation of “Researchers’ Night” events etc.

Furthermore, the Foundation’s own funding schemes have evolved over the years to best support research and technological development on the island. Since 1998, a number of funding programmes have been developed aiming at the promotion of excellence in research, collaboration with industry and the development and upgrading of research infrastructure. However, one of the most important strategic aims has been the development of the research human potential. This aim has seen the development of programmes addressed to young researchers, aiming to support their successful and long-term integration into the research community of Cyprus.

All of the above are a testimony to how important the development of the research human potential is considered by the Foundation. In this respect, the strategic aims of the Foundation are directly aligned with those of the Commission. However, \textit{a more “aggressive” and coordinated approach is required} if the ERA is to create the necessary working environment for the research community to thrive on. Recommendations such as the “Charter and Code” are indeed valuable but will only remain theoretical if they are not \textit{followed up by a suitable assessment and monitoring system regarding their implementation across Europe}.

\textit{Legal issues should be dealt with and administrative procedures should be harmonised and simplified} in order to allow and promote the mobility of researchers across Europe but also attract the best researchers from outside Europe.
Financial investment in mobility-related activities (such as the “PEOPLE” Programme) should be increased and various fiscal and other incentives for Organisations, SMEs and researchers should be examined for possible adoption.

Finally, more support should be channelled towards researchers in their early Post Doc career who are the backbone of the research community across Europe.

**Developing World-Class Research Infrastructures (Q11-15)**

A step towards better planning and developing of research infrastructures at European level has indeed been achieved with the creation of the European Strategic Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) and the establishment of a coordinated European Roadmap that aims in identifying new research infrastructures of pan-European interest according to the long term needs of the European research communities.

Although EU Member States and Associated Counties participated in ESFRI and in the creation of the Roadmap, their national financial contribution in ESFRI projects has not been up to this point, the expected one. Therefore, a prerequisite for the implementation of the ESFRI Roadmap is the development of national roadmaps and policies for research infrastructures, which should then be integrated in the European and global roadmaps.

An efficient and dedicated legal structure at European level should also be developed, in order to facilitate the management and operation of pan-European interest research infrastructures, including electronic infrastructures. This legal framework should address issues like the financing and coordination of research infrastructures, access rules, how to handle bioethics issues and regulatory aspects of innovation such as Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

There is also the need for further development of world-class research electronic infrastructures, integrated, networked and accessible to research teams from across Europe in order to remove traditional constraints related to time, geography, discipline and institutions. These electronic infrastructures should include data repositories and high-speed networks such as GÉANT and grid technologies.
Sharing Knowledge (Q21-24)
A crucial issue, which is rightfully covered by the Green Paper, is the need for normalization and streamlining of the IPR and patenting laws and regulations across the EU. The level of complexity that exists right now concerning IPR issues and regulations that apply to European, national and regional programmes is a great inhibitor to innovation, especially for SMEs with scarce resources. Even though the achievement of a universal EU patenting system and relevant IPR regulations seems infeasible right now, it should still remain as the ultimate goal in parallel to the efforts taken to develop a coherent pan-European litigation system.

The failure to yet identify a common patenting practice throughout Europe and the absence of a strong and cost effective Community Patent have been detrimental and are adding to the confusion of researchers. On this account, it would be effective if the grace period, joint ownership regimes and the research exception are looked from a European perspective, including a top-down approach from the Commission to national patent authorities. Further, the Commission’s support for the establishment of a “litigation insurance” scheme would provide a boost of patenting.

With respect to the promotion of innovative approaches in the way science and technology is communicated, it would be advisable to increase awareness amongst research communities about the importance of interdisciplinarity of research and also identify measures in disseminating relevant research results to them.

The importance of involving the industrial sector in research activities should be emphatically stated in the Green Paper. It is, indeed, an urgent need to somehow bring the research institutions in Europe closer to industry, a move that has been linked to knowledge sharing and innovation boosting, as many successful models in the US and a few in Europe suggest. This in practice could be achieved:

- by enormous coordinated efforts to change the culture of academics on how they view their relations with industry,
- by introducing policies and incentives for enticing public universities to change their regulations and rules of operation so as to “force” academics to
get closer to industry as a prerequisite to career advancement (e.g. requiring academics to obtain partial funding for their research from industry), and

- by *relaxing regulations* that in some countries forbid academics from developing spin-off companies.

**Optimising Research Programmes and Priorities (Q25-29)**

All funding programmes which are designed and implemented by funding and research organisations at European, national and regional level should be evaluated on the basis of their objectives, policy, target institutions and European dimension.

The main goal should be to examine the effectiveness of these schemes and try and find ways of optimising their effect. The bottom-up approach of the ERA-Net scheme has contributed to this target, but so far the results show a static picture at a certain period of time and for certain research activities. Information through the ERA-Net scheme is fragmented (partly due to the existence of more than one ERA-Net in one area, and partly due to the fact that not all funding organisations participate in all ERA-Net projects) and this may be assigned to the bottom-up approach of the subject.

*What is needed is a top-down approach that should involve a detailed study of all the existing funding and research programmes carried out in EU member states.*

Furthermore, *there should be more coordination of initiatives such as Joint Technology Platforms, Joint Technology Initiatives, European, national and regional programmes.* Presently, the efforts to identify and decide on societal issues of European dimension is fragmented (e.g. there is minute or no coordination between ERA-Net consortia and Technology Platforms) and the use of intergovernmental organisations (not necessarily research) might be effective in bringing together all stakeholders and public authorities.

However, *care should be taken not to rule out stakeholders on the criterion of European dimension of the social issue in question.* Effective pooling of resources and capacities should include freedom and flexibility in assessing the necessity of research in an area whether this is serving regional or European societal issues.
Opening to the World: International Cooperation in S&T (Q30-35)

International cooperation should be pursued, especially when addressing major global issues which would be beneficial for the European citizen.

Bilateral and multilateral agreements that are already in place, between various member states and countries outside Europe, should be explored and used as a platform for further collaboration if this is possible and deemed necessary.

In conclusion, the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation is clearly in favour of further actions been employed in view or realising the ERA. Small countries like ours can only benefit from participating in such initiatives and we would like to confirm our commitment to this cause despite the physical constraints which limit research activities and investments on the island. The upgrading of these activities needs long term planning, consistent efforts and cooperation of all the stakeholders. However, it is envisaged that the gap in the level and quality of R&D activities between Cyprus and its European partners will be narrowed in the near future and Cyprus will be able to fulfil its role in the ERA.