

## **EUROHORCs DECLARATION ON REINFORCED RESEARCH COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

### **Preamble**

European culture has always been marked by a strong knowledge orientation. In the course of European history we have witnessed the emergence of national knowledge and science systems, which altogether made up an interesting but rather fragmented structure. Gradually, the rise of various forms of cooperation among researchers in Europe can be observed, in order to enhance scientific quality, efficiency in the use of scarce resources and access to scientific research, e.g., through quality review support, transfer of grants among different countries, international mobility and capacity building, cooperation in large scale facilities, cooperation in thematic programmes and the like. The trend towards internationalisation of scientific research has exerted a great influence on the research culture in Europe, where especially the Framework Programmes have proven decisive towards intensified European research cooperation. To make the Sixth Framework Programme instrumental to the realisation of the European Research Area (ERA) further boosts this trend. Notwithstanding this important development, it ought to be recognized that because of the specific orientation of the Framework Programmes, science-driven and fundamental research in many fields has benefited far less from the above trend. Against this background the recent ideas on the creation of a European Research Council (ERC) are noteworthy, as they may offer a new momentum for strengthening the profile of scientific research in Europe across all disciplines. Provided an evidence base of added value in terms of enhanced research quality and impact is established, an ERC may become a critical instrument for generic scientific excellence in Europe and thereby substantially add to the realisation of the ERA.

Clearly, the most important message from the research community is that science-driven research ought to be operationally independent from political bodies. Science is of critical importance for our societies and cultures, but it ought to have its free manoeuvre space to get the best results. A strong and broad science base is a key prerequisite for sustained innovation. While underscoring the importance of global scientific co-operation within the ERA, the EUROHORCs see it as their task to share responsibility for a decisive upgrading of scientific research in European countries, that builds on strong research traditions in individual countries and successful funding schemes for innovative research.

### **EUROHORCs Declaration**

At the meeting of its Assembly in Oegstgeest, the Netherlands on 19 May 2003, the European Union Research Organisations Heads of Research Councils (EUROHORCs), have issued the following Declaration on Research Cooperation in Europe.

The EUROHORCs, assembling the major publicly funded national research organisations in the Member States of the European Union and associated countries,

#### 1. Having regard to:

- a. the aims of its members with respect to the enhancement of science at a national level, through the identification and funding of high quality research,
- b. the importance of science, including engineering, the humanities and the social sciences, for the development of a knowledge based society,
- c. the accountability of its members to their respective national funders,

#### 2. Taking note:

- a. that the Heads of States and Governments of the EU have set the goal that Europe should become the world's leading knowledge based economy by 2010,
- b. that the Heads of State and Governments of the EU have set a target that R&D investments in the EU should approach 3 percent of GDP by 2010,

- c. of the current discussions in Europe with respect to the possible creation of a European Research Council (ERC), like the Copenhagen conference, the "Sykes Report" of the ESF, the "Mayor Group" as well as the EMBO-conferences

3. Recognising that:

- a. the development of a European Research Area can lead to a truly internal market for science, in which researchers, knowledge and technologies would move freely around Europe, with solid solutions for IPR issues
- b. research is increasingly collaborative across national borders and in many fields there is a need to combine efforts and reach critical mass,
- c. to boost high quality research one needs to increase the number and quality of researchers,
- d. a quality driven research system enhances the attractiveness to remain in such a system and for high quality researchers from other countries to join,

4. Recalling the longstanding European collaborations in frames like CERN, ESRF, ESA, ESO and EMBO and the wide spectrum of established and newly emerging collaborative actions between (subsets of) EUROHORCs' members, in particular:

- a. the EUROCORES scheme implemented through the European Science Foundation
- b. research training collaborations (e.g. "International Graduierten Kollegs", NorFa)
- c. joint initiatives along the lines of the "Laboratoires Europeens Associes" (LEA), "Programmes Internationaux de Cooperation Scientifique" (PICS), "Groupement de Recherche Europeen" (GDRE) and Joint International Unit" (UMI)
- d. the mutual transfer of grants over national borders ("money follows person" e.g. DACH, EPSRC and NWO)
- e. the joint EURYI-scheme for young investigators
- f. exchange of referees, joint review panels, quality benchmarks
- g. the Forward Looks activities implemented through ESF,
- h. initiatives in the frame of ERA-NET
- i. mechanisms to facilitate access to research infrastructures for European scientists (e.g. exchange of shiptime agreement between BMBF, NERC, Ifremer, NWO and CSIC)
- j. to be expanded on the basis of ongoing input from individual declarations,

5. Declare that:

- a. these collaborative actions are important in terms of creating added value, where excellence is enhanced, as well as where fragmentation and compartmentalisation in Europe's public research systems is tackled (including the existence of barriers that hinder international mobility of scientists).
- b. it is important to continue, to build on and reinforce this type of cooperation in order to further develop collaborative actions that yield comparable advantages for the achievements of the objectives of its members (for instance, research training cooperation, emerging research areas, research infrastructures),
- c. like with the existing collaborative actions, these additional actions should be undertaken on a voluntary basis, through an open method of coordination among the EUROHORCs' members, as widely as functionally and practicably possible,
- d. it is of utmost importance to involve similar organisations from the Accession States in these collaborative actions where possible, to which end EUROHORCs will actively solicit full membership from these countries as soon as practicable,
- e. partnership should be found with the activities of the European Commission and its Framework Programmes when appropriate, being complementary to activities in the frames of e.g. EMBO, CERN, ESA and ESO ,

- f. with the actions described under 5 a-e, the EUROHORCs wish to reinforce their contribution to the ERA<sub>2</sub>
  - g. EUROHORCs wish to play a prominent role in the debate concerning the possible establishment of an ERC, which if it is to be developed, should draw on the strengths and experiences of and be related appropriately to the national research councils
6. Underscore the importance that the EUROHORCs communicate actively on their collaborative endeavours with the respective national ministers responsible and towards the European Commission
7. And call on the Member States and the national funders of the EUROHORCs as well as on the EU to support and where possible to stimulate these collaborative efforts of EUROHORCs in a progressive way.