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## Austrian Presidency Conference on European Technology Platforms

Vienna, 4-5 May 2006

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 1. Conference Objectives

The Austrian Presidency held a major conference on European Technology Platforms in conjunction with the European Commission in Vienna on 4-5 May 2006 with the intention of bringing together, for the first time, a broad range of stakeholders and other relevant interested parties in European Technology Platforms.

The Conference sought to draw lessons and conclusions based on the experience to date of the European Technology Platforms, as well as to assess the role of platforms in boosting European competitiveness. The Conference also aimed to facilitate networking between a wide range of stakeholders and to raise awareness amongst a broader audience on European Technology Platforms.

#### 2. Key Messages

There was a clear consensus at the Conference that European Technology Platforms, by bringing together a wide range of stakeholders led by industry in a bottom-up process, are proving a **valuable framework for addressing ways to boost Europe's competitiveness** via research and innovation.

The Conference welcomed and endorsed the **role of the European Commission to date in facilitating and encouraging** the work of European Technology Platforms. There was consensus that **the Commission should continue and reinforce this role** into the future.

The Conference responded positively to the suggestion of the European Commissioner for Science and Research, Mr Janez Potočnik, by which European Technology Platforms would extend their role to take a **proactive approach to overcome barriers to innovation in Europe by identifying what needs to be done in relation to regulation, standardisation and public procurement**.

#### 3. Recommendations

The majority of European Technology Platforms have reached the stage where they are preparing to implement their Strategic Research Agendas. To maximise their impact, the Conference made the following recommendations.

- European Technology Platforms should be **focussed solely on areas which can contribute significantly to enhancing competitiveness** and which are **addressing major European challenges**. Proliferation should be avoided as the fragmentation of research efforts among many platforms would dilute their impact.

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- **Increased cross-platform interactions** should be encouraged with a view to addressing horizontal issues, exchanging good practice and avoiding overlap of research activities. The Commission should play a role in facilitating such interactions.
  - European Technology Platforms demonstrate a continued **commitment to openness and transparency**. The Conference recognised that the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in defining the common visions and research agendas of platforms serves to increase commitment to these objectives and, hence, enhances the platform's effectiveness. In this regard, all European Technology Platforms should publish clear **terms of reference** on their website.
  - European Technology Platforms should build a **long-term, constructive inclusion process** from an early stage, including targeted actions to involve SMEs and civil society organisations.
  - **Coordination and cooperation between European Technology Platforms and national and regional authorities, programmes and policies** should be encouraged. The Conference recognised that, through their role in strengthening the European Research Area, European Technology Platforms can increase the attractiveness of Europe as a location for research investment and increase employment in research in Europe.
  - The Conference recognised the importance of **following an interdisciplinary approach** in order to take account of the complex interactions between technological development, society and environment in a long-term perspective.
  - European Technology Platforms take proactive steps to identify and define how **future education and training needs** will be met.
  - In certain cases, the **establishment of national technology platforms** in areas corresponding to European Technology Platforms could play a useful role. These can serve as a link to the activities of European Technology Platforms and, at the same time, can **enhance coordination in implementing national policies**.
  - National and regional authorities should explore how **European Technology Platforms can act as valuable sounding boards** for developing, implementing and coordinating national and regional research, technology and development plans.
  - **National authorities should promote those European Technology Platforms that correspond most closely to their research and development priorities**. The goal should not be to participate in every European Technology Platform, but to focus on those that are most relevant.
  - Possibilities to establish **common actions with other programmes** such as the Structural Funds and EUREKA and to strengthen funding synergies with national or regional, as well as European funding schemes, should be further explored.
  - European Technology Platforms should develop **effective governance structures** which are flexible enough to be adaptable as platforms evolve.
  - European Technology Platforms should develop **viable financial engineering strategies** from an early stage and be creative in identifying potential sources of public and private funding. In this regard, the Seventh Research Framework Programme should be recognised as only one, amongst a range, of potential sources of funding to implement projects set up in the framework of European Technology Platforms. The Conference welcomed the Commission's proposal to organise a seminar on financial engineering with European Technology Platforms.

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#### 4. Moving Forward

The Conference noted that many **European Technology Platforms are preparing to move from definition to implementation of their Strategic Research Agendas**. In this regard, it urged European Technology Platforms to translate their Strategic Research Agendas into concrete actions and deliverables.

The Conference acknowledged the important role European Technology Platforms have played in helping the European Commission to **identify research priorities under the Seventh Research Framework Programme** and emphasised the need to carry this through to the annual Work Programmes.

The Conference welcomed that the Commission will propose a **limited number of Joint Technology Initiatives** in areas of strategic European importance where the normal instruments are not sufficient and EU-wide public-private partnerships are required.

Finally, the Conference confirmed that European Technology Platforms are a **key driver in helping European to unlock its innovation potential and address the challenges and opportunities of globalisation**. It urged stakeholders to continue to work together in implementing their Strategic Research Agendas with the dynamism and enthusiasm that has been demonstrated so far.