

## **ADVANCING SCIENCE IN EUROPE: TOWARDS A EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA**

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Europe has been one of the major cradles for the development of modern science. Since the last world war, Europe has steadily developed various instruments: networks, joint research programmes and centres and many cooperative structures, paving the way to the establishment of strong scientific links and synergies within the EU and the emergence of an European feeling among the scientific community. However the situation of European Sciences *vis à vis* its main competitors: Japan and US is not as good as it should be. A quick review of benchmarking indicators in Science and Technology in Europe shows that, despite some strength, a number of weak points and a regressive evolution are noticeable, in particular: low number of researchers, low investment in R&D especially for the private sector, brain drain, low productivity in terms of patents.

To counteract the negative evolutive trends the EU has decide to make The European Research Area (ERA) a reality through an ambitious research policy based on:

- A commitment of member countries to increase the national investment in R&D to 3% of their GDP by 2010, and to “make Europe the most competitive knowledge society by 2010”
- To increase the budget of and redesign the Framework Programme (FP6) for RTD with quite new instruments aimed at improving the coordination, share of efforts and research infrastructure. In particular “integrated research projects” and “networks of excellence” in seven priority areas will constitute the main elements of the backbone, together with other tools of networking.

Forest and forest based industries play a major role in Europe as they provide various goods and services: economic, environmental, societal and cultural. Science and technology associated to the European forest cluster are quite substantial, but they are characterized by a high level of fragmentation and public funding except, to a certain extent, for the pulp and paper domain. The achievements have been tremendous within the forest cluster over the last 20 years, with the emergence of the EU Framework Programmes (1 to 5) and the establishment of networks under COST, EUREKA, INNOVAWOD, and EFI (1). However, the new 6<sup>th</sup> Framework programme with its new instruments and its increased budget has unfortunately a low profile in the field of forests and forest products related research. This is difficult to understand and admit as the rational production and use of renewable natural resources can contribute better than other sectors, to sustainable development.

(1) acronyms:

COST: Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical research in Europe

EUREKA: financial instrument supporting industrial research and technology

INNOVAWOOD: umbrella organisation in the field of R & D on forestry, woodworking and furniture industries

EFI: European Forest Institute