III

(Preparatory Acts)

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

444th PLENARY SESSION, HELD ON 22 AND 23 APRIL 2008

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the ‘Communication from the Commission — Competitive European regions through research and innovation’

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On 16 August 2007, the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 262 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the

Communication from the Commission — Competitive European Regions through Research and Innovation — A contribution to more growth and more and better jobs.

The Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption, which was responsible for preparing the Committee’s work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 3 April 2008. The rapporteur was Mr Pezzini.

At its 444th plenary session, held on 22 and 23 April 2008, the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 130 votes in favour with 2 abstentions.

1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1 The Committee can only give firm support to the Commission’s initiative to the degree that this takes into account not only the problems of demand, but also — and primarily — supply-side optimisation, avoiding failures and red tape.

1.2 The Committee is convinced that the promotion of initiatives at local and regional level and the capacity to network them in furtherance of the Lisbon Strategy is essential for combined research and development efforts that are successful in setting up and developing innovative businesses throughout the Union. Above all, however, it is essential to involving economic and social players operating at territorial level in working towards the shared goals of more and better jobs, in a context of overall sustainable and competitive development.

1.3 The Committee reiterates the importance of the knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation), which plays a critical role in promoting growth and jobs. For this reason, it is urgent to step up reforms, promote excellence in higher education and in partnerships between universities, research centres and companies and ensure that all education and training sectors play their full part in nurturing creativity and innovation, especially at regional and local level. This especially applies to those specific regions — Euregios — where neighbours and partners are networked in areas that transcend national borders.

1.4 The Committee thinks that the competitiveness of Europe’s regions and their development in economic, social and employment terms must be pursued more pro-actively and with more coordination than at present. This will make it easier to get the best possible tangible results in pursuit of the Lisbon Strategy goals.

1.5 The Committee concurs unreservedly with the Commission’s diagnosis of shortcomings in the joint and coordinated use of the Community instruments, but expresses its regret that more than ten years later this crucial issue is still approached in terms of analysis rather than getting to the nub of the problem, which is to develop new simultaneous engineering capacities (1) of various types across both Community and European action.

1.6 The Committee considers that action on the demand side is needed, but is not sufficient in itself. In its view, we must move on from declaring the need for regions to be more focused and achieve:

(1) As the term is used in Commission documents, i.e. to mean simultaneous planning.
— a territorial strategy for research and technological and innovation development;

— specific considerations regarding crossborder cooperation (Euregio);

— a coordinated use of Community instruments;

— more information on opportunities available at national and European level;

— and a major reduction in red tape.

1.7 In the Committee’s view, far-reaching action should be taken on the supply side to ensure a consistent framework that provides easy access to all available instruments. The aim is to overcome legal obstacles and the time-lag between initiating and actually delivering financial support, in order to make Europe’s regions more competitive.

1.8 The Committee considers it vital that a European Practical Guide be compiled which furnishes an overview of:

— types of Community and pan-European actions available;

— differences in eligibility and evaluation criteria;

— whether procedures and management run concurrently or not;

— and whether possible interventions are compatible and complementary.

1.9 The Committee also maintains that specific and precise Community action can no longer be postponed if new simultaneous engineering capacities of various types of action are to be achieved and resources are to be maximised and concentrated in the regions.

1.10 As it has stated in a previous opinion (3), the Committee thinks there is an urgent need, therefore, to address the problems of plurality of governance levels and the fragmentation of interventions needed for a competitive relaunch of Europe’s regions. In this connection it proposes instigating a new initiative — entitled JASMINE: Joint Assistance Supporting Multiprojects for Innovation Networking in Europe — to tackle the present institutional gaps on both the demand and supply sides and to cut red tape significantly.

1.11 The aim of JASMINE should be to enable the various players involved in a network decision-making process to behave in a more informed and coordinated way within a single coherent regional planning framework.

2. Background

2.1 The European regions of knowledge are contending with numerous elements of change that constitute both challenges and opportunities and influence their capacity to achieve the goals of the revised Lisbon Strategy.

2.2 These elements of change include:

— external factors: more intense globalisation, the emergence of areas of the continent with very dynamic growth, much higher energy and raw materials prices, unforeseen scientific and technological developments, the internationalisation of innovation, climate change issues and often unmanaged or unmanageable migratory pressures;

— internal factors: population ageing, protection of the environment and quality of life, obsolescence of production and services, public sector modernisation, growing interaction between new emerging kinds of knowledge and available human resources, capacity for cultural growth and creativity, and development of common territorial infrastructure, both physical and intangible.

2.3 The Committee has expressed its views on these issues a number of times, both in specific contexts and in the broad context of the evolution of the Lisbon Strategy and Community policies on research and innovation, the environment and education and training.

2.4 In particular, the Committee has emphasised the need to ‘enable the whole EU area to adjust to the challenges of the knowledge-based economy and thus help all regions to take account of the Lisbon objectives’ (4).

2.5 The Committee has further asserted that: ‘The new configuration of competitive models on the global market is imposing major changes. The new integrated platforms and networks must address themes relating to research and innovation, the management of new human resources, promotion and marketing, finance and credit, logistics and market and client service management’ (5).

2.6 The Committee reiterates its conviction that the promotion of initiatives at local level and the capacity to network them in furtherance of the Lisbon Strategy are essential to encourage the setting-up of innovative businesses in a context of sustainable and competitive development. This especially applies to those specific regions — Euregios — where neighbours and partners are networked in areas that transcend national borders. In its opinion on the Green Paper on The European Research Area:

(5) See opinion (rapporteur Mr Wolf — OJ C 44/1 of 16.2.2008), point 1.14: ‘The Committee recommends that clear and comprehensible rules be developed to manage the wide range of Community instruments for promoting and coordinating R&D. This includes a summary list (and instructions for use) of all instruments and measures available to the Commission for promoting and coordinating R&D objectives …’.
2.7 In its opinion on the Green Paper on The European Research Area: New perspectives, the Committee recommended that ‘the European Research Area should be complemented by a European Knowledge Area designed to create a European knowledge-based society’ and pointed out that “[c]oordination [was] also needed from the Commission to create effective leadership and advisory structures and to ensure that work […] [was] well organised” (5).

2.8 Finally, the Committee has underscored the importance of the knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation), which plays a critical role in promoting growth and jobs. For this reason, it is important to step up reforms, promote excellence in higher education and in partnerships between universities, research centres and companies and ensure that all education and training sectors play their full part in nurturing creativity and innovation, especially at regional and local level.

2.9 The Committee thinks that the competitiveness of Europe’s regions and their development in economic, social and employment terms must be pursued more pro-actively and with more coordination: the Commission must try to get beyond the obstacles presented by various legal bases and procedural criteria. The aim must be to make the best use for the taxpayer of various Community budget instruments in order to maximise tangible results in pursuit of the Lisbon Strategy goals. These results should be in areas such as the effectiveness of joint access, coordination, and synergies and synchronisation of available interventions at Community and pan-European level. They should achieve the critical mass needed to generate a multiplier effect.

2.10 According to the renewed Lisbon Agenda’s integrated guidelines for growth and jobs, cohesion policy has three strategic priorities (6):

— improving the attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities (science cities) (7) by improving accessibility, ensuring adequate quality and level of services, and preserving the environment;

— encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy by research and innovative applications, including new information and communication technologies; and

— creating more and better jobs by attracting more people into employment or entrepreneurial activity, improving adaptability of workers and enterprises and increasing investment in human capital.

2.11 On the supply side, difficulties in achieving a leverage effect and a coordinated use of funding instruments available for achieving these goals stem from the inherent nature of the instruments themselves, namely:

— the different managerial and procedural emphases that govern them;

— their size (i.e., territorial or transnational);

— the specific nature of the goals they pursue;

— different legal bases;

— and the allocation of decision-making and managerial responsibility to different bodies and organisations.

2.12 On the demand side, regions often:

— lack a clear, defined and shared vision of a regional strategy for research and technical innovation development;

— experience information and communication difficulties;

— lack sufficient capacity to manage complex projects spanning different levels and with different goals;

— have underdeveloped clusters and district networks;

— have underdeveloped professional, technical and organisational capacities needed to fully capitalise on innovation strategy.

2.13 Shortcomings must be addressed by making technical assistance and coordination available to all Community programmes from the outset.

2.14 The commendable synergy initiatives in various structural programmes and instruments for the 2007-2013 period would appear to be a prerequisite — albeit not the only one — for getting the best concrete results from them.

2.15 The Committee has expressed its support for Commission initiatives such as JEREMIE and has proposed a JEREMIE Focal Point to act as a coordination and information unit between the various actions, pointing out the lack of ‘a project capable of coordinating and fine-tuning the many loan instruments currently in existence’ (8).

2.16 The Committee fully supports and concurs with Commissioner Hübner’s statements on JASPERS, JEREMIE and JESSICA (9), which have created new dynamics and expectations for investment, growth and jobs in the Member States and regions, as well among the social partners across all the regions of the European Union’.

(7) See also the Science Cities initiative www.sciencecities.eu.
(9) JEREMIE: Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises; JESSICA: Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas; JASPERS: Joint Assistance in Supporting Projects in European Regions.
2.17 The Committee maintains that the guidelines adopted by the European Union committee for scientific and technical research (CREST) (10) and published in September 2007 are important in showing the way forward, though they are confined to the interaction between the Framework Programme for research and development and the new Structural Funds.

3. The Commission proposal

3.1 The Commission proposal makes clear the possible synergies that already exist in the funding instruments of European research, innovation and cohesion policies. These are available to stakeholders in order to make Europe's regions more competitive, depending on their capacity to absorb them.

3.2 The principal instruments for action spotlighted are the Seventh Framework Programme for research and development, the new Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and the new focuses of the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

3.3 The Commission makes it clear that it has worked with a number of advisory coordination groups, which have recommended:

— the development, as part of their RTDI strategy, of a specific strategy for the coordinated use of the framework programme and of cohesion policy programmes;

— using network exchanges and links to improve strategic governance of RTDI;

— effective synergies to consolidate and improve RTDI capacities, the cultivation of excellence, attention to SMEs, and establishing cooperation at European and international level and harnessing the results;

— improving communication and collaboration between national and regional operators and with beneficiaries;

— using initiatives of the dedicated 'Capabilities' programme of the Seventh Framework Programme for coordinated actions;

— strengthening synergies, together with the Member States, between the cohesion policy and the 7th RTD framework programme.

3.4 The Commission calls on the Member States to improve the options for the coordinated development and use of Community instruments and to create systems to inform participating operators of the opportunities available to them. In order to encourage coordinated access to funding, it also undertakes to publish a practical guide by the end of 2007 on the funding opportunities for research institutions, including the arrangements provided by national and regional mechanisms.

4. General comments

4.1 The Committee concurs unreservedly with the Commission's diagnosis of shortcomings in the joint and coordinated use of the Community instruments it mentions; it does not, however, endorse the treatment prescribed, which it thinks is not enough to achieve the goals of the Community policies, above all regarding research, innovation and training.

4.2 The Committee agrees with the Commission (11) that 'central to the realisation of the renewed Partnership for Growth and Jobs is the effort to promote the knowledge economy, in particular through research, technological development and innovation', but believes that this partnership is the joint responsibility of all parties concerned, at Community level no less than at national, regional and local levels.

4.3 The Committee sees a need to go beyond the development of a territorial strategy of technological and innovation research and development and in addition make use of:

— foresight and SWOT analysis instruments (12) to identify the strategic opportunities of regions;

— pertinent capacity-building and professional training actions;

— increased attractiveness of working in research and development to avert a brain drain both within the EU and towards the rest of the world;

— exchange of experts and of experience in innovation;

— support for the development and coordination of knowledge-based industrial districts;

— the European Technology Platforms and the Joint European initiatives;

— Community instruments in a coordinated way, with the creation of interactive systems to inform participating operators of the opportunities available to them;

— opportunities for communication and pooling of experience, especially between SMEs.

4.4 In the Committee's view, far-reaching action should be taken on the supply side to ensure an easily accessible framework for all the instruments available for the competitive development of Europe's regions. This development should be compatible with the aims of a 'socially responsible region', involve the social partners, chambers of commerce, academia and organised civil society, and be based on a strategy of European industrial policy (13) that is sustainable in terms of both production and consumption.

(10) CREST Guidelines — 1.6.2007.


(12) SWOT: Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis.

4.5 Moreover, while instruments are listed which help boost growth, create more and better jobs and make Europe’s regions more competitive through research and innovation, the Committee finds the list incomplete, since it does not mention all the relevant Community intervention instruments and omits the coordination opportunities and requirements of available pan-European and international instruments.

4.6 The Communication omits to mention, or mentions only in passing (14), possibilities of intervention such as:

— the European Investment Bank, with its wealth of opportunities;

— the Innovation 2010 Initiative (i2i);

— the collaborative initiatives undertaken at European and Community level, such as the European R&D Infrastructures (ESFRI) and the European Technology Platforms;

— facilities for human resources in science and technology and EIBURS (EIB University Research Sponsorship Programme);

— STAREBEI (STAges de REcherche BEI) and BEI University Networks;

— regional and local funding for R&D and innovation;

— public and private investments in R&D and innovation;

— ICT and audiovisual services;

— the integrated Education & Training 2010 work programme, comprising additional sectoral programmes covering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation (15), which is an integral part of the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation;

— Community information society intervention instruments with programmes within the i2010 initiative (16);

— the contribution of social dialogue to bolstering the knowledge-based society;

— enhancing lifelong and periodic education;

— the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (17) aimed at providing one-off targeted support to ease the reemployment of workers from branches or sectors suffering the shock of serious economic upheaval (18).

4.7 Moreover, there is no mention of the pan-European, non-Community, programmes and initiatives that nevertheless promote innovation in the EU, such as:

— the Eureka initiative, a pan-European network for market-oriented industrial R&D organisations with which the Commission has concluded a cooperation agreement and which assists the competitiveness of European companies by creating links and networks of innovation in thirty-six countries;

— the Eurostars programme, the joint EC-Eureka initiative based on a Europe-wide scheme to support SMEs in developing new market products and services;

— the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which has concluded a partnership agreement with the Commission designed to facilitate the planning of large projects co-financed by the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), especially in the new Member States, in the period 2007-2013;

— the LEED/OECD (Local Economic and Employment Development) programme, which identifies, analyses and disseminates innovative ideas for local development and seeks — sometimes in collaboration with the European Commission — to improve the governance of SMEs;

— the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), which has a partnership agreement with the Commission and funds social projects to improve economic and social cohesion and increase social integration, environmental protection and the development of human capital in the regions;

— various Euregio activities and initiatives;

— and the science cities initiatives.

4.8 The Committee also sees a need, while respecting Article 54(5) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, for greater clarification of the difficulties and impediments to joint and coordinated use of applicable instruments at national, regional and local level and by individual operators (19), not only with regard to different legal bases, thematic specialisation, geographical area and modes of implementation, but also in terms of substantial, and sometimes fatal, differences, such as:

— whether or not projects are transnational;

(19) See opinion OJ C 44 of 16.2.2008, page 1, point 4.8: ‘Existing Community instruments for promoting and coordinating R&D objectives. On the other hand, the Committee recommends that general, clear and comprehensible rules should be developed to manage the wide range of Community instruments for promoting and coordinating R&D. It would be very helpful if the Commission listed and described (i.e. provided comprehensible instructions for use for) all the instruments and measures available to it for promoting and coordinating R&D objectives. This would also show whether, among the growing plethora of instruments, the purpose of each one is adequately defined and the instruments properly separated, and whether they can be easily understood by potential users and Commission staff or need to be overhauled to make them clearer’. 
— whether they start at the same time;
— whether funding is provided at the same time;
— whether projects run concurrently;
— the possibilities and capacities for breaking down a wide-ranging territorial action project into a series of ‘subprojects’ to be carried out as required by individual Community, pan-European and international programmes and instruments.

4.9 The Committee considers it vital that a European Practical Guide be compiled which furnishes an overview of types of Community and pan-European actions available, the various evaluation criteria and whether possible interventions are compatible and complementary.

4.10 The Committee reiterates the need for coordinated and joint action concerning the links between Community structural policies and the Union’s research and innovation policies, as the Committee has urged on several occasions and stresses that ‘close coordination of these policies is essential in order to achieve optimum levels of practical synergy and to enable the needs of citizens, businesses and society to be fully met with the overall objective of sustainable, smooth medium- to long-term growth, in keeping with the integrated RTD problem-solving approach and with the key development factor of intangible investment’ (20).

4.11 The Committee stresses the large number of Community policies that, alongside cohesion policy and research policy, help to improve the competitiveness of Europe’s regions, and reiterates the need for an integrated and coordinated approach which comprises:
— a sustainable industry policy, as highlighted by the Brussels European Council in December 2007, whereby ‘an integrated approach to European Competitiveness should be fostered by a sustainable industrial policy, combined with innovation and skills, while developing its external dimension in order to ensure a level playing field’ (21);
— a reappraisal of the European single market policy to ensure an innovation-friendly environment, protection of intellectual property and collaboration between universities, businesses and research centres, as well as an enhanced policy of legislative standardisation;
— a social and employment policy which provides for a structured social dialogue, shared flexicurity principles (22), support for active ageing and policies of active inclusion and lifelong learning for all;
— a policy of sustainable development and consumption which is committed to the research and application of clean and innovative technologies and includes an integrated policy on climate and energy, sustainable management of natural resources and sustainable production and consumption.

4.12 In this connection, the Committee reiterates its existing views on the need to (24):
— formulate and adopt an overall Community strategy for streamlining the relevant mechanisms of European policies, in order — while respecting regional identities — to allow Europe to speak with one voice from the point of view of competitiveness and the sustainable and harmonious development of the European system;
— ‘identify integrated instruments [of] local, regional and national innovation markets’;
— ‘establish the levels of integration and their interaction, inter alia in order to synchronise and ensure the compatibility of the decision-making and implementation aspects of the structural cohesion policy and RTD/innovation policy. This is vital in order that the policies be fully and effectively integrated’;
— ‘identify new ways to combine the cohesion and RTD instruments, using simplified methods and procedures which are, wherever possible, uniform and automatic. Full advantage should be taken of the possibility allowed […] to vary the levels of support for company RTD’;
— ‘set up systems to control and monitor combined RTD/cohesion schemes in order to assess their effectiveness in terms of the achievement of the declared objectives; this could be done by using pre-established and harmonised performance indicators, as well as benchmarking at regional level’.

4.12.1 The Committee also recommends the integration of Community training programmes.

4.13 The Committee expresses its regret that ten years later this crucial issue is still approached in terms of analysis rather than getting to the nub of the problem, which requires Community intervention to provide new simultaneous engineering capacities of various types of action (technological, demonstrative, innovative, dissemination, educational, financial, etc.) — the aim being to boost employment and production at regional level (23).

(20) See opinion OJ C 40 of 15.2.1999.
(22) As set out in point 16 of the Conclusions of the European Council of 13 and 14 March 2008 and in EESC opinions.
(23) See footnote 23.
The Committee maintains that specific and precise Community action can no longer be postponed if the risk of losses in productivity and employment in Europe’s regions is to be averted.

5. The EESC proposal

The Jasmine (Joint Assistance Supporting Multiprojects for Innovation Networking in Europe) initiative

5.1 The EESC advocates a voluntary instrument for simplifying and removing bureaucratic, procedural and conceptual obstacles to the joint use of pan-European, Community, national and regional programmes in line with an accelerated development of the European Research Area (ERA).

5.2 The Committee considers that the current priority is to address problems relating to the plurality of governance levels of the various available interventions to restart the competitiveness of Europe’s regions. To this end, it proposes a new initiative — Jasmine: Joint Assistance Supporting Multiprojects for Innovation Networking in Europe — to tackle the present institutional gaps, on both demand and supply sides, in interventions to support innovation and research in the regions.

5.3 Community action should be based on Policy Networking, which could take the following forms:

— a horizontal policy network which involves public and private entities in the regions, such as local governments, business, banks, NGOs, interest groups and social dialogue institutions (27):

— the creation of a Jasmine Focal Point as a Community coordination and information unit between the different levels and different kinds of action — subject to different rules and with different managerial responsibilities within and outside the Commission’s services — to maximise their results. It could have its own website, for example, but should not be unduly centralised (28):

— the creation of a Community Network of Jasmine Focal Points in regions that so desire to ensure the overall coherence of projects that are divided into several subprojects; linkage between the territoriality and the transterritoriality of the subprojects themselves; finding national and transnational partners for multiproject proposals; ensuring that projects start, receive funding and are implemented at the same time; avoidance of duplication;

— the voluntary creation by regions of regional Jasmine Holding Funds, which should be given briefs defined in advance by the Commission and be accredited by it on the basis of cost effectiveness, efficiency, impartiality, equal treatment and procedural transparency;

— the launch of a Foresight Community action called Competitive European Regions that will benefit from the experience of DG Research and involve senior officials of all the relevant Commission services, together with political representatives of the regions and with the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee;

— the incorporation of specific benchmarking actions on the ‘success […] [of] new methods of governance based on transparency, simplification of procedures and a genuine partnership with the local and regional socio-economic players (29):

— capacity-building action for local administrations and economic and social players, support for the development of transnational networks for project partnerships, monitoring of the synergies and synchronicities of projects, and support for a transparent and interactive communication and information strategy.

5.4 For the purpose of the initiative, the EESC proposal provides for:

— steps to enable the various players to act in a more informed and coordinated way and be dependent on one another for information, managerial capacities, competences and financial resources. This would enable multi-level governance interventions to be launched at the same time within a single coherent regional planning framework, whether this involves Public/Private Partnership actions or national, Community and transnational actions;

— a vertical policy network which involves governance institutions at various levels — international, Community, national and regional — in well-defined and well-structured systems of cooperation;

— a horizontal policy network which involves public and private entities in the regions, such as local governments, business, banks, NGOs, interest groups and social dialogue institutions (27);

— the creation of a Jasmine Focal Point as a Community coordination and information unit between the different levels and different kinds of action — subject to different rules and with different managerial responsibilities within and outside the Commission’s services — to maximise their results. It could have its own website, for example, but should not be unduly centralised (28);

— the voluntary creation by regions of regional Jasmine Holding Funds, which should be given briefs defined in advance by the Commission and be accredited by it on the basis of cost effectiveness, efficiency, impartiality, equal treatment and procedural transparency;

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— the incorporation of specific benchmarking actions on the ‘success […] [of] new methods of governance based on transparency, simplification of procedures and a genuine partnership with the local and regional socio-economic players (29):

— capacity-building action for local administrations and economic and social players, support for the development of transnational networks for project partnerships, monitoring of the synergies and synchronicities of projects, and support for a transparent and interactive communication and information strategy.

(28) See point 3.14 of opinion OJ C 44 of 16.2.2008, page 1: ‘The Commission should certainly avoid the impression that its aim is to introduce central management of European research; this would further fuel the existing concern of the general public n the Member States about excessive centralisation in Brussels’.
5.4 The new priorities of regional programmes, focused on innovation, competitiveness and reciprocal learning throughout active life, should make it possible to develop active policies to reinforce and sustain the competitiveness of regions through the funding of regional and interregional foresight exercises, clusters and district networks that provide a strategic vision shared by each region. This can serve as the basis for a technical support action for the best combined use of the most suitable national, Community and pan-European instruments and PPPs.

5.5 Jasmine could serve as a guarantee which would facilitate the acceptance of individual projects by reassuring various funding bodies and programmes that they are a part or stage of a larger project. This could be done on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding or a cooperation agreement between the European Commission and other Community and non-Community bodies, or under the Commission’s administrative regulations when different services of the Commission itself are responsible for individual programmes.

5.6 The aim of Jasmine is to facilitate the mobilisation of financial resources covering different managerial responsibilities and different tiers of governance (public or private) to achieve an optimum critical mass of resources — thus increasing the total leverage effect — in order to create a single multi-project framework that fully meets a European region’s shared strategic vision of improving its strong points in technology and innovation.

5.7 Jasmine should be based on the experiences of the Lead Market Initiative, the European Technology Platforms and the Joint Technology Initiatives and on the outcomes of ERANET and ERANET PLUS, the Regions for Economic Change and PRO INNO initiatives and JEREMIE, JASPERS and JESSICA (28).

5.8 Jasmine could maximise the innovation and research efforts of the regions and the companies, human resources, universities, research centres and administrations on which they rest — through the Knowledge and Innovation Communities of the European Institute of Technology (EIT), for example. It should be remembered, however, that innovation is for the most part a commercial activity that must be able to function in the best possible operational environment, especially regarding the tax burden on research, the treatment and protection of intellectual property and the excellence of education and training structures which will generate more and better jobs.

5.9 Finally, Jasmine could help to make the most of the distinctive advantages of the regions and to promote exchanges on innovation and research.


The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Dimitris DIMITRIADIS

(28) See footnote 9.