

# **AUSTRIAN PRESIDENCY CONFERENCE ON EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS**

**Vienna, May 4-5, 2006**

## **Background and Context**

In the past few years, European Technology Platforms have emerged on a number of strategically important issues with high societal relevance where achieving Europe's future growth, competitiveness and sustainability objectives is dependent upon major research and technological advances in the medium to long term. The European Commission has very much welcomed this development and begun itself to promote the concept since 2003, inviting industry and other potential stakeholders to explore the potential for setting up technology platforms as a means of addressing strategic technological challenges. In the intervening three years, the concept has been widely taken up and there are currently 25 European Technology Platforms at various stages of development.

These technology platforms have each brought together significant numbers of stakeholders with up to 200 players actively involved in some platforms. By mid-2006, some technology platforms will have been in existence for up to three years. It is, therefore, timely to bring together a broad representation of the various groups of stakeholders involved in technology platforms to participate in a broadly-based forum. The seminars with industrial leaders that the Commission has organised at six-monthly intervals since 2004 have already demonstrated the value and benefit of such interaction. It is envisaged that the conference would have 400 participants including industrialists, representatives of public authorities and other stakeholders.

The organisation of a conference on European Technology Platforms towards the middle of 2006 is also appropriate in view of the timetable for the launch of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), scheduled for the beginning of 2007.

Given the importance which the Austrian authorities are giving to technology platforms and the global issue of competitiveness of European industry, the future Austrian EU Presidency is in an ideal position to organise such an event, in close cooperation with the Commission. Furthermore, the positive experience of the Austrian authorities in organising a national information event on technology platforms shows that the prospects for a big event are very encouraging.

## **Objectives and Target Group**

The objectives of the conference are:

- to bring together for the first time a broad range of stakeholders (e.g. industry, SMEs, academia, consumer organisations) and other relevant interested parties in European technology platforms;
- to facilitate wide-ranging networking between stakeholders in different platforms with a view to promoting cross-platform exchanges of experience;
- to draw some lessons and conclusions based on experience to date for the implementation of European Technology Platforms in the context of FP7;

- to assess the role of technology platforms in boosting European competitiveness and the role of national authorities in this context;
- to raise awareness amongst a broader audience on the existence of technology platforms and their activities.

## **Content and Structure**

The conference will focus on a wide range of current and future issues with regard to the development and implementation of European Technology Platforms. This will be achieved primarily by drawing on the experiences and views of participants directly involved in platforms at policy and operational levels.

The conference will be structured around plenary and parallel sessions. The plenary sessions will comprise a formal opening session with statements by leading figures from the political and business worlds in Europe (e.g. Commissioner Potočnik, Austrian Minister(s), senior representatives of European industry, Austrian Chambers of Economy and Business) and working sessions where the aim will be to cover themes of relevance and importance for all participants.

The parallel sessions will allow a number of important cross-platform issues to be discussed in greater depth in break-out groups. Parallel sessions will involve two short opening interventions to introduce the topic followed by an open discussion.

Topics covered in the parallel sessions are as follows:

- Strengthening European competitiveness in the era of Globalisation
- Ensuring Openness and Transparency
- Taking account of the social, human and environmental dimension
- Interacting with national & regional authorities and programmes
- Achieving effective governance

## **Press and Information**

A press event will be held outside of, but in conjunction with, the conference. There will also be a press release following the conference, presenting the main conclusions.

A website will be set up to provide information prior to, during and after the conference.

An exhibition will be organised, which will give individual platforms as well as appropriate intermediaries and other relevant players, an opportunity to present information

## **Expected Outcome**

The conference will have the following outcomes:

- a conference recommendation, endorsed at the closing session of the conference and setting out a number of conclusions about the future direction of European Technology Platforms in practice. This will be used as input for the Competitiveness Council;
- a conference report, summarising in detail its deliberations and results and including the documentation presented during it;
- the text of the press release, to which the conference declaration can be annexed.