

Preface

Janez Potočnik

Published online: 4 June 2009

© European Conference of Transport Research Institutes (ECTRI) 2009

Dear reader,

Easy and free access, especially via the Internet, to the latest knowledge in strategic areas such as transport, can drive innovation, advance scientific discovery and support the development of a strong knowledge-based economy. It is therefore crucial for EU research. Open access science journals are therefore a step towards achieving the “fifth freedom” in Europe — the free movement of knowledge between Member States, researchers, industry and the public at large.

Open access to research articles, previously accessible through journal subscriptions, can increase the impact of the EU’s € 50 billion investment in research and development, and avoid wasting time and valuable resources on duplicative research. With better access to science literature, researchers can build upon this knowledge to further their own work. Small and medium sized businesses can also use the latest research developments to speed up innovation and time to market.

This is why I wholeheartedly welcome ETRR, the new open access journal, which will reach thousands of researchers and industrialists Europe-wide and beyond. I support its objective of being a journal of high scientific merit, covering all transport research fields. I hope ETRR will prove to be a publishing platform for new ideas on policies, standardisation actions and research needs, and as such, I would encourage all FP7 transport projects to use it to publish their results. I wish the journal every success in boosting European excellence in transport.

In the context of the current economic crisis, it is even more important to find and adopt new solutions in transport. Indeed, transport sustains Europe's economies, and free and easy access to scientific knowledge may speed up adoption of innovative technologies. The current crisis is an opportunity to redouble research efforts, particularly in breakthrough technologies that will usher in the low-carbon economy.

Although today's emphasis is on economic recovery, the opportunity has to be taken to develop sustainably and responsibly. Technology is not the only way to tackle climate change, but technological solutions will allow continued economic growth in a sustainable manner.

This is why the EU has made the necessary investment in technological development through the setting up of Joint Technology Initiatives. By combining public and private funding, and by fostering stronger links between the research community and industry, these partnerships have an important integrating effect on research and will stimulate innovation.

In the field of aeronautics, the “Clean Sky” Joint Technology Initiative was launched in 2008. This partnership between industry, the research community and the European Commission will invest €1.6 billion into aeronautics research. The seven-year research programme combines public and private capacities to rapidly introduce advanced technologies for the next generation of aircraft. The aim of these new technologies is to radically reduce noise and emissions in air transport, and reduce aircraft fuel consumption.

The present financial and economic crisis is hitting the car industry particularly hard. The economic recovery plan presented by the Commission in November 2008 includes a ‘European Green Cars Initiative’. This new public-private partnership will invest €1 billion into research on renewable

J. Potočnik (✉)
European Commission,
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
e-mail: janez.potocnik@ec.europa.eu

and non-polluting energy sources for road transport, with a strong emphasis on electrical vehicles. This will be complemented by a further € 4 billion from the European Investment Bank.

Let me take this opportunity to invite researchers in industry and academia to join us in making the “Clean Sky” and “Green Cars” initiatives a success. These are urgent priorities for Europe, for sustainable growth, for jobs and for competitiveness.

Short term economic concerns cannot distract us from long term environmental needs. The European Technology Platforms, which bring together stakeholders in road, rail, air and waterborne transport, have ‘Strategic Research Agendas’ for 2020 and beyond. It is these priorities, outlined by transport stakeholders, that have shaped our own policy choices and are the foundations of our current European research programme for transport.

I therefore also invite you, as European researchers, to make yourself heard through these stakeholder organisations, to feed the debate, create synergies, implement these research agendas, integrate knowledge and competencies, and contribute to the development of cutting-edge technologies.

The development of an integrated, greener, safer, smarter European transport system requires breakthrough research in each transport mode, not just for air and road, but also in the rail and waterborne sectors. The greening of waterborne transport, for example, will focus research on the optimisation of the energy efficiency of ships and on the effective reduction of emissions.

At the same time, sustainable mobility of freight and people in Europe relies on our ability to ensure the modal shift which would unblock our crowded transport corridors. Research on logistics and intermodality is essential. In the rail sector there is an urgent need to implement new technologies to improve freight services, and ensure their competitiveness. This will be a key priority of the next call for funding in the Surface Transport Programme.

The wider aim of our research policy is to develop the European Research Area (ERA). We want to open up European research, stimulating greater movement of

knowledge and of researchers. This will promote excellence, improve cooperation between academia and industry, and lead to more innovation. This can be achieved by encouraging greater coherence between national and EU research programmes. The Commission is working with Member States to make this a reality.

Linking up with ERA is the Lead Markets Initiative, looking to improve conditions for business investment in research and innovation in Europe. The Initiative focuses on markets with high growth potential, where EU industry can develop a competitive advantage provided that specific actions are taken to address market failures. The actions include effective regulation, standardisation, labelling and certification, innovation-friendly public procurement and sector-specific intellectual property conditions. ‘Clean Sky’ and the ‘Green Car Initiative’ are linked to the Lead Market Initiative, notably in the renewable energy sector.

It is my hope that European researchers, research organisations both public and private, as well as research associations in the transport sector will combine their efforts in order to create a European Research Area which will drive innovation, advance scientific discovery and support the development of a strong knowledge-based economy in Europe.



Janez Potočnik
Commissioner for Research