

EARTO POSITION ON A EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY - MAY, 2006 -

EARTO actively supports the proposal to create a European Institute of Technology (EIT), recognising that:

- it opens a window of opportunity for an additional European policy effort, clearly focussed on innovation, to advance the Lisbon objectives, with the condition that an EIT should be funded with “new money”;
- an EIT would offer opportunities of particular interest to RTOs, given their characteristic focus on innovation and engagement with industry, and thereby permit their fuller participation in European RDTI efforts;
- the debate has only just begun and it is likely to be some time yet before ideas settle and final agreement on an operational model for an EIT is achieved and implementation begun.

EARTO supports an EIT which would complement – not compete with - the proposed European Research Council (ERC).

The ERC has a remit to promote “frontier research” (i.e. basic research): researcher-driven and selected for support on the sole criterion of scientific excellence. **The ERC’s watchword is science.**

EARTO supports an EIT dedicated to mobilising the best available research resources to develop innovative strategies and solutions in response to identified European priorities. **The EIT’s watchword is innovation.**

Since the ERC focuses exclusively on researcher-driven scientific excellence, it would seem inappropriate to try to link it operationally to an EIT focussed on needs-related innovation. The two initiatives should be allowed to evolve separately, without any competition between them: both are justified, “let many flowers bloom”.

The positioning of the EIT with regard to other European initiatives – notably the planned JETIs, Technology Platforms, the thematic priorities of the Framework Programme, the Joint Research Centre, EUREKA – must be clarified and clearly articulated.

JETIs	Bottom-up, industry-driven	EIT programmes and projects could fill critical gaps, covering in particular European socio-economic priorities which wholly or substantially self-funded, industry-driven and
Technology Platforms	Bottom-up, industry-driven	
FP thematic priorities	Bottom-up, mainly researcher-driven	

JRC	Policy support, but generally little own policy research	bottom-up initiatives will tend to neglect, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • green energy • strategies for an ageing European population
Eureka	Bottom-up, industry-driven, linked to national thematic priorities	

The role of education and training as an integral part of an EIT requires further clarification. Existing innovation-related initiatives such as the Fraunhofer Technology Academy could serve as an example.

A networked EIT which was little more than a series of FP6-style thematic Networks of Excellence would add no value. Clear thematic targeting must be accompanied by strong results-oriented management. EARTO therefore supports an EIT model along the following lines:

- The EIT would be a network institution operating strategic, needs-related, problem-solving and therefore inter-disciplinary innovation programmes targeting priority themes for European society and economy in a medium- to long-term time frame (e.g. 5-15 years as a broad indication)
- The EIT would comprise a Council and a Management.
- The EIT Council, composed of eminent personalities representing society and the economy, would agree, in broad consultation with stakeholders, a select programme of priority innovation themes. It would dispose of a budget, contributed from public and private sources, to fund research corresponding to its priority themes. Research programmes and projects would be commissioned through open calls for proposals inviting innovative research in response to specified objectives.
- The EIT Management would execute the agreed research programme, reporting to the Council. It would conclude research contracts with the selected research teams (programmes/projects) and manage the deliverables-oriented execution of those contracts.

The active, enthusiastic participation of all relevant stakeholders – public and private, social and economic – in both the EIT’s strategic decision-making and financing will be crucial for its success.