A fundamental priority of the Greek Presidency is a contribution to the attainment of the goals set by the European Councils, and especially the Lisbon strategy, in the fields of research, innovation and leading edge technologies, in order to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge economy.

Within this framework, the Greek Presidency will work towards the promotion of the following objectives:

- To deepen and redefine the implementation of the European Research and Innovation Area, as this is a significant factor for the reinforcement of competitiveness, employment and, more generally, for the transition to a knowledge-based society.
- To assist the participation of the enlargement countries in the European system of research and technology and to reinforce the scientific and technological cooperation and dialogue of the European Union with countries of the Balkan, Mediterranean and the Black Sea Regions.
- To strengthen the relationship between science and society, including ethical issues arising out of rapid progress in biotechnology.

To achieve these strategic aims, the Council will promote the development of substantive dialogue and decision-making for the following issues:

- The definition of measures and policies, mostly on the basis of the forthcoming Action Plan by the European Commission on the increase of investment in Research and Technological Development, especially private investment, so as to achieve the goal of the Barcelona European Council - that by 2010 research expenditure should approach 3% of GDP. The consequences of enlargement on the achievement of this target will also be examined.
- The promotion of the European Research Area on the basis of the recent communication by the European Commission presenting an evaluation of progress made to date. Priority will be given to matters related to mechanisms of strengthening coordination of national activities, especially in the application of the open method of coordination in national research policies, as well as to the reinforcement of human potential and mobility of researchers. Furthermore, priority will be given to the promotion of actions for the better exploitation of research results, the collaboration between universities and industry, including the formation of innovative enterprises.
- The framework for the development of mechanisms for the coordination of national policies of Research and Technological Development. Special weight is attributed to the adoption of the decision for the first pilot application of Article 169 of the Treaty in the field of the development of new clinical interventions for combating AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis with which the contribution of Europe in solving important problems of developing countries is highlighted.
- The investigation of measures for the promotion of the European strategy and the action plan for biotechnology and the reinforcement of the interaction between science and society, especially on matters of bioethics.

Furthermore, during the Greek Presidency priority will be given to the advancement of a European Space Strategy based on the Green Paper, given that, because of its multiple applications and impact on a broad range of policies, it is a basic determinant in the reinforcement of competitiveness of the European economy. In this framework, priority will be given to the adoption of the framework agreement between the European Community and the European Space Agency (ESA).

Finally, the Greek Presidency will attempt the introduction of a European debate on the idea of Research and Technological Development for the cooperation in the fields of defence and security. This crucial issue may contribute significantly to the promotion of cohesion of European space as well as to the achievement of the goals of Lisbon.
It constitutes actually a main component of the “Open Coordination Method”, which was adopted by the Competitiveness Council of 26th November 2002, for the development of the European Research and Innovation Area. The above dimension includes assessment and comparison of procedures and performances, identification of best practices and exchange of experiences and know-how.

The Athens Conference coincides with the completion of the first cycle of the exercise and the beginning of the second one. Therefore, it is expected to have a significant contribution both in the assessment of the results of the first cycle as well as in the design of the next. The first cycle resulted in a 5 reports prepared by respective Working Groups, in the framework of a High Level Group established to examine specific aspects of the European Research Area. The results of the first cycle will be presented in the first part of the Conference, through specific examples from Member States and candidate countries. Fields where the first cycle of the benchmarking exercise could be applied and discussed in the second part of the Conference.

• Conference on the promotion of the 6th Framework Programme of the Balkans and the Black Sea Regions

Thessaloniki, 17-19 February 2003

The goal of this event is to present the 6th Framework Programme (FP6) and new regional integration in the region. The Conference is working for the elaboration and adoption of an Action Plan for RTD cooperation between the European Union and the Balkan countries (candidat and Western Balkans countries) that will specifically, within a three-year time frame, number of priorities for collaboration in research and innovation in the region. At the same time, the possible countries and processes for funding these activities will be examined. The Action Plan will be developed by new Thessaloniki Conference. Ministers: scheduled for 26-27 June 2003.

• Conference on ‘Benchmarking National RTD policies’

Previous to the Conference, a Preparatory Meeting of High-level Officials will be organized for the preparation of the Action Plan and the Preparatory Meeting will be held in Thessaloniki, 3-4 March 2003.

The “Benchmarking National RTD policies” exercise, was launched by order of the Greek Presidency (March 2002), when it was acknowledged as one of the most useful task for the evaluation of RTD policies of the participating countries.

• European Conference “Foresight in an enlarged European Research and Innovation Area”

Ottawa, 15-16 January 2003

The aim of this Conference is the exchange of experiences and best practices between of foresight stakeholders in an enlarged Europe (policy-makers, foresight specialists and practitioners, representatives from research and industry, etc.) as an extension of the European Research Area, emphasizing on issues related to the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions.

• Conference on Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

Thessaloniki, 28-31 May 2003

The Conference aims to highlight the environmental problems of the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Seas areas, together with socio-economic aspects, the impact of human activity, population density, the development of sustainable development strategies. The Conference will also focus on Strengthening scientific and technological collaboration, as an extension of the European Research Area, emphasizing on issues related to the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions.

• The Greek Presidency will also host:
  - The Coordinating body of the European Platforms for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS)
  - Monitoring Committee (MoCo) of the Euro-Mediterranean Environment and Sustainable Development Convention

The main objective of the meeting is to exchange views and information on the science and policy approaches in the field of the Euro-Mediterranean Environmental and Sustainable Development Convention. Furthermore, the meeting aims to a first assessment of the results of the implementation of the Convention, in the area of sustainable use of natural resources, in the Mediterranean and Black Sea areas. The Conference aims at strengthening scientific and technological collaboration in marine science and technology between the EU, Mediterranean States and the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea region.

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