

**UNICE RTD Working Group early reaction  
to the publication of the Commission Communication  
*"Towards a European Research Area"*  
(COM 2000-6 Final)**

UNICE welcomes the publication by the Commission of its Communication *"Towards a European Research Area"* and the opportunity that was given to discuss the content of the document at an early stage.

UNICE wishes to put these early comments in the perspective of the objectives of European R&D policy as defined by Article 163 of the Amsterdam Treaty, namely *"to strengthen the scientific and technological basis of Community industry and encouraging it to become more competitive at international level"* and regrets that this is not mentioned explicitly in the document despite the alarming analysis shown in its appendix II.

UNICE clearly supports a policy that aims at maintaining and improving a strong science base in Europe but wishes to recall that innovation, leading to competitiveness, growth and employment does not just result from direct application of fundamental science, as the old linear model suggests, but rather from the dynamic interplay between the R&D in companies, which represents around 2/3 of the European research effort, and research in universities and research institutes.

Therefore, UNICE considers that improving co-operation between industries and universities should be the priority of the 6th Framework Programme and would have preferred more emphasis to have been given to this collaboration in the present Communication.

Provided they are placed explicitly in this context, UNICE generally shares the objectives of the document when they aim at:

- real integration of the RD policy with all other policies
- more efficient use of public monies by co-ordination of public research at regional, national and European levels provided the subsidiarity principle is taken into account and adequate room is left for dynamic emulation between research groups and projects
- avoiding unnecessary duplication in research expenditures, especially when costly infrastructures are involved

- giving young people "*a taste for science and technology* " by improving the quality and relevance of science teaching at all levels (see IRDAC 1994 Report, Quality and relevance - The challenge to European education) and improving the conditions for the mobility of researchers, including "industrial" researchers
- orienting the role of the Joint Research Center (JRC) to independent scientific activities supporting the European policy-making process. **UNICE** fully agrees and has often argued that "*policy options and decisions must be based on more solid scientific knowledge and a full and proper understanding of the economic and social aspects surrounding the problems in question*" rather than on emotional reactions.

**UNICE** particularly supports the sections of the document devoted to

- development of effective European tools for the protection of intellectual property
- the encouragement of risk capital investment and company start-ups by such actions as support of networking and dissemination of information on best practices
- encouragement of more efficient ways to use public monies to support private R&D efforts and university-industry collaboration

and regrets that no explicit priority is given in the Communication to these points of paramount importance.

**UNICE** is ready to make its contribution to development of European R&D policy, along the lines of its previous position paper (January 1996) calling for "*a balanced public policy in favour of basic and applied research*", and will provide more detailed comments on the Communication at a later stage.