

**CONFERENCE ON ACCESSION
TO THE EUROPEAN UNION
– CROATIA –**

Brussels, 9 June 2006

CONF-HR 3/06

EUROPEAN UNION COMMON POSITION

Subject : Chapter 25: Science and Research

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Chapter 25: Science and Research

This position of the European Union is based on its general position for the Accession Conference with Croatia (CONF-HR 2/05), and is subject to the negotiating principles endorsed by the Accession Conference (CONF-HR 5/05), in particular:

- any view expressed by either party on a chapter of the negotiations will in no way prejudice the position which may be taken on other chapters;
- agreements - even partial agreements - reached during the course of the negotiations on chapters to be examined successively may not be considered as final until an overall agreement has been established;

as well as to the requirements set out in points 13, 16 and 26 of the Negotiating Framework.

The EU underlines the importance for Croatia of compliance with the Stabilization and Association Agreement as well as the Accession Partnership, which constitute basic elements of the pre-accession strategy.

The EU encourages Croatia to continue the process of alignment with the *acquis* and its effective implementation and enforcement, and in general develop already before accession policies and instruments as close as possible to those of the European Science and Research Policy instruments.

The EU notes that Croatia, in its position (CONF-HR 1/06) accepts the *acquis* under chapter 25 as in force on 1 January 2006, and that Croatia declares that it will be ready to implement it by the date of its accession to the European Union.

Research Policy

The EU takes note of the information Croatia has provided on EU Research Policy in its position.

The EU notes that Croatia is already well placed to address the targets of the European Research Area, and encourages Croatia to improve the investment in research infrastructure, tackle the problem of brain drain and the need to simplify implementation procedures, and address shortcomings in research policy and in the national research system for providing funding (e.g. lack of career development grants, too many small grants, regional imbalance; peer review by international evaluators).

The EU notes Croatia's objective to address the targets of the European Research Area and notes that its policies are sufficiently well coordinated and coherent to allow progress towards these targets.

Framework Programmes

The EU takes note of the information Croatia has provided on the EC Framework Programmes in its position.

The EU underlines the need to ensure scientific independence regarding all scientific institutions, and the role of international peer-review, in order to contribute to Europe's scientific excellence.

EC Framework Programme

The EU welcomes Croatia's full association to the Six Framework Programme (FP6) since 1 January 2006, and welcomes Croatia's intention to request its association to the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7).

The EU further notes that in Croatia the administrative capacity for participating in the EU Framework Programme has developed, and encourages Croatia to pursue its intention to further strengthen this administrative capacity.

EURATOM Framework Programme

The EU also encourages Croatia to participate in the EURATOM part of the Seventh Framework Programme as soon as possible and recalls that Croatia is obliged to participate upon accession.

European Research Area

The EU takes note of the information Croatia has provided on the European Research Area in its position.

The EU encourages Croatia to enhance the participation of industry in research projects, and underlines the importance of strengthening human resource capacities.

European Research Fund for Coal and Steel

The EU notes that membership of the European Research Fund for Coal and Steel is mandatory for all new Member States and takes note of Croatia's intention to participate in the fund upon accession. The EU notes that for this purpose a future financial contribution from Croatia to the Fund will be required and that the precise calculation of this contribution will be covered under chapter 35 "Other issues".

The EU welcomes Croatia's intention to examine measures needed to improve its research capacities for participation in the Fund.

Agricultural Research

The EU notes Croatia's intention to draft a special act, which would incorporate existing rules and regulations, thus comprehensively regulating agricultural research in Croatia. The EU takes note of Croatia's intention to draft and adopt this act in the course of 2007/2008.

The EU welcomes Croatia's intention to give further direction on agricultural research in accordance with EU objectives through collaboration with the European Commission.

The EU invites Croatia to attend the meetings of the Standing Committee for Agricultural Research as an observer and recalls that Croatia will become a full member upon accession.

International Scientific and Technological Cooperation

The EU notes the information Croatia has provided concerning the EURATOM-related agreements. The EU recalls that if required these international agreements have to be brought into conformity with the *acquis*, and takes note of Croatia's intention to do so. The EU recalls that the issue of the compatibility of relevant international agreements with the *acquis* will be addressed in chapter 30, External Relations.

Actions relating to 3% objective

The EU welcomes the initiative to establish an overall 'National 3% Action Plan', which will help Croatia to increase the investment in research in compliance with the targets set in the Lisbon Strategy and the Barcelona Action Plan.

The EU takes note of Croatia's Programme of Innovative Technological Development (HITRA).

The EU takes also note of Croatia's intention to pursue specific goals related to the implementation of the 3% Action Plan through the Open Method of Coordination and its intention to participate in the third cycle of Open Method Coordination within the framework of CREST.

Article 169 Initiative

The EU welcomes Croatia's intention to participate in initiatives under Article 169 of the EC Treaty.

Actions relating to mobility of researchers

The EU takes note of Croatia's initiative to draw up a national action plan for the mobility of researchers in line with the principles laid down in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conducts for the Recruitment of the Researchers, and also takes note of Croatia's intention to complete this document during 2007.

The EU invites Croatia to actively participate in the European Researcher's Mobility Portal, the ERA-MORE project and the Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility (SGHRM) to which Croatia was invited to participate as an observer.

Actions relating to Science and Society

The EU underlines the importance of continuing actions with all major stakeholders of Croatian society to follow the targets of 'Science and Society', which are an integral part of the European Research Area. It invites Croatia to consider the elaboration of a national Action Plan on 'Science and Society'.

The EU encourages Croatia to establish an exchange of information with the European Commission concerning the 'Science and Society' dimension.

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limited scope and particular nature of *acquis* obligations in this chapter, the EU considers that exceptionally benchmarks for the provisional closure of this chapter are not required. The EU therefore notes that, at this stage, this chapter does not require further negotiation.

Monitoring of progress in the alignment with and implementation of the *acquis* will continue throughout the negotiations. The EU underlines that it will devote particular attention to monitoring all specific issues mentioned above with a view to ensuring Croatia's administrative capacity, its capacity to take up EU-funded research projects, as well as continuous and adequate availability of budgetary resources. Particular consideration needs to be given to links between the present chapter and other relevant negotiating chapters such as Intellectual Property Law and External Relations. A final assessment of the conformity of Croatia's legislation with the *acquis* and of its implementation capacity can only be made at a later stage of the negotiations. In addition to all the information the EU may require for the negotiations in this chapter and which is to be provided to the Conference, the EU invites Croatia to provide regularly detailed written information to the Stabilisation and Association Council on progress in the implementation of the *acquis*.

In view of the above considerations, the EU may return to this chapter at an appropriate moment.

Furthermore, the EU recalls that there may be new *acquis* between 1 January 2006 and the conclusion of the negotiations.
