

Brussels, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2007

## **Open Letter to the Members of the ITRE and CULT Committees of the European Parliament**

### ***- European Institute of Technology -***

The European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO) has consistently supported the Commission's concept of a European Institute of Technology<sup>1</sup>. EARTO continues to do so, believing that if the EIT is given a realistic chance to establish itself it will contribute a further valuable element in the construction of the emerging European innovation system.

The Chief Executive Officers and senior management of leading European RTOs, at their recent EARTO-EUROTECH meeting in Finland, have critically reviewed the current discussions in Parliament and Council about the Commission's EIT proposal. While they accept that the Commission's ideas are in some respects lacking in detail or substance, their principal concern at this time is that the wide-ranging political debate is focussing too much on easily criticised details and is at risk of missing the essential point.

The EIT is needed precisely as an innovation "flagship", to use the term originally employed by Commission President Barroso. Europe's problem is not its science: Europe's problem is the inadequate pathways that link its generally excellent science base to government, industry and other knowledge consumers and transformers. It is these links and synergies which generate innovation. The importance of the EIT is that it can help build and strengthen these pathways.

The EIT is different from the European Research Council, European Technology Platforms, Joint European Technology Initiatives, Eureka and other European research and technology initiatives. All have a valuable contribution to make. We outlined this already in the earlier EARTO position paper and we offer to further explicate it in the presentation by EARTO Deputy Secretary General Christopher John Hull to the Joint EIT Hearing of your Committees on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Properly configured, the EIT has the potential to reinforce and complement these other initiatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. EARTO position paper of April 2007: [http://www.earto.org/EARTONews2006/EARTO\\_EIT\\_Final.doc](http://www.earto.org/EARTONews2006/EARTO_EIT_Final.doc)

EARTO and EUROTECH offer their full support to the EIT, especially in its development phase. RTOs, with their long and successful experience of providing high-value innovation services to industry and government, have much to contribute. They offer critical mass, multi-disciplinary capacity, long-term partnerships, large-scale technical facilities, and dynamic research programmes continually adapted to new and emerging innovation needs. They provide research and development services, technology transfer through licensing and enterprise creation, and postgraduate training in technology and innovation.

EARTO invites the members of ITRE and CULT to give their support to the creation of the EIT. The German Presidency of the European Union has communicated a compromise proposal whereby the Governing Board of the EIT would be required to provide a more detailed operational concept for final approval by the Parliament, Commission and Council in 2008. We commend this pragmatic approach, which will give the EIT the time and distance required to properly position itself in the evolving European innovation landscape. Careful selection of the founding members of the EIT Governing Board members will be critical for success; the selection process must be transparent and the selection criteria must reflect the EIT's objectives, with properly balanced representation of industry and research (RTOs and universities).



Prof. Dr. Erkki Leppävuori  
President, EARTO  
President, VTT

### **EARTO and EUROTECH**

*EARTO, the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations, is the European trade association of RTOs. It represents over 300 RTOs who provide high-value R&D and related technology services to enterprises, governments and other customers. EARTO's members employ over 100,000 scientists, engineers and technicians, perform over €10bn of research and technology services annually, serving the needs of over 100,000 clients each year in the public and private sectors, including SMEs.*

*The EUROTECH group within EARTO brings together the CEOs and senior management of leading European RTOs including: ARC Seibersdorf, Commissariat à l'Énergie Atomique, Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, Danish Technological Institute, FOI, Sintef, Tecnalía, TNO, QinetiQ, VTT.*

