

EARTO 2007-2008

A Report on EARTO Activities in 2007 and 2008

- UPDATE: MAY 2008 -

This document was first published in late December 2007. It was updated in May 2008. The principal items added then are boxed like this.

EARTO'S MISSION AND STRATEGY

The current mission and strategy of EARTO, summarised below, were originally set by the EARTO Executive Board in 2004 and have been reviewed at intervals since, most recently in 2007.

The conclusion of the most recent review was that good progress continues to be made in promoting and defending the interests of RTOs and in developing services for members; by contrast, success in promoting contacts with industry has been limited.

The Mission

1. Promote and defend the interests of RTOs in Europe

2. Provide added-value services to EARTO members

The Strategy

- 1. RTOs key-player category**
- 2. European programmes attuned to interests of RTOs**

- 1. Networking and exchange among members**
- 2. European funding opportunities**
- 3. Promote contacts with industry**
- 4. Facilities in Brussels**

Further explanation of the mission and strategy may be found in the Annex.

EARTO ACTIVITIES IN 2007 AND EARLY 2008

- UPDATE: MAY 2008 -

The following pages briefly review the principal activities of EARTO during 2007 and early 2008. Some activities serve more than one objective. Therefore, by way of introduction, the following table summarily relates different activities to EARTO's mission and strategy.

1. PROMOTE AND DEFEND THE INTERESTS OF RTOS IN EUROPE

1. RTOs key-player category	<p>"EARTO White Paper": <i>RTOS in the Evolving European Research Area</i> European Institute of Innovation and Technology EURAB and ERAB Responsible Partnering Contributions to ERA Green Paper debate Contributions to IP Charter Participation in Commission Expert Groups <i>ÆRTOS</i> DESCA, Meeûs</p>
2. European programmes attuned to interests of RTOs	<p>EURAB and ERAB European Institute of Innovation and Technology EARTO Task Forces Participation in Commission Expert Groups EARTO Survey of RTO Overhead Costs</p>

2. PROVIDE ADDED-VALUE SERVICES TO EARTO MEMBERS

1. Networking and exchange among members	<p>EARTO Annual Conference EARTO Working Groups, Special Interest Groups EARTO News EARTO FP7 Benchmarking Service</p>
2. Exploiting European funding opportunities	<p>FP Training Courses (with Hyperion Ltd) EARTO FP7 Proposal Preparation Service DESCA Meeûs EARTO News</p>
3. Promote contacts with industry	<p>Responsible Partnering DESCA Cooperation with EIRMA</p>
4. Facilities in Brussels	<p>EARTO meeting facilities in Brussels Assistance in relations with the Commission, Parliament, other European organisations</p>

■ **"EARTO WHITE PAPER": RTOs IN THE EVOLVING EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA**

The purpose of the paper is to reinforce the message of the earlier EURAB report on *RTOs and ERA*. It does this by:

- expanding arguments about the distinctive role of RTOs in modern innovation systems;
- giving examples of recent policy initiatives in European countries which illustrate the growing recognition which governments are giving to RTOs, and
- providing a statistical analysis of RTOs' important role in the EU Sixth Framework Programme.

Preparation of this policy paper began in 2006, within the EUROTTECH Special Interest Group. The work was further supported in 2007 by the EARTO Executive Board and the EARTO Working Group on RTO Strategies (see below).

The paper was published in January 2008 and given wide circulation in the Commission, Parliament and other European organisations. The members of the EARTO Executive Board distributed the paper to key national organisations and people. Its publication was timed to coincide with the concluding discussions on the Commission's Green Paper on the future of the European Research Area.

■ **EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY**

EARTO has championed a certain idea of a European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) since it was first proposed in 2005, believing that it can offer an important boost to innovation policy in Europe and significant opportunities for RTO participation.

We have emphasised the value of an EIT which would:

- focus on providing solutions to strategic social and economic challenges facing Europe;
- network existing players with relevant skills, resources and knowledge – in particular, RTOs;
- secure funding – public and private – additional to existing European budgets, and
- employ strong programme and project management in order to ensure delivery of results.

The EIT debate has been long and politically charged, with many in Council and Parliament doubting the need for such an initiative.

EARTO has given practical support to the responsible European Commissioner, Ján Figl, through endorsement letters and a well regarded presentation on the positioning of the EIT to a joint meeting of the European Parliament's ITRE and CULT Committees.

The EIT was formally launched in early 2008.

EARTO prepared a paper in January 2008 "*Making the EIT a Success: The Essential Contribution of Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs)*" to illustrate that RTOs already perform many of the functions intended for the EIT and that they therefore have much to contribute to the EIT.

EARTO contributed in April 2008 to the discussion about the selection criteria to be employed for choosing the 18 appointed members of the EIT Governing Board.

In May 2008 EARTO nominated seven candidates for the EIT Governing Board. The results of the nomination process are expected to be known in June.

■ **EURAB AND ERAB**

The European Research Advisory Board (EURAB) was a high-level advisory body to Research Commissioner Potočník. The mandate of EURAB ended during 2007. Its successor will be ERAB – The European Research Area Board.

EARTO was successful in providing four of the original 45 members of EURAB, including our former President, Jan Dekker, and EURAB was an important vehicle for promoting RTO interests, in line with EARTO's strategy. Two influential EURAB reports with strong RTO and EARTO participation were *RTOs and ERA* and *SMEs in ERA*.

ERAB will be a smaller body (22 members), of very high level, and with a remit to consider especially the practical implementation of European research policy.

EARTO successfully nominated Unni Steinsmo, CEO of SINTEF, for membership of ERAB and the new body will begin its work in June.

■ RESPONSIBLE PARTNERING

The Responsible Partnering initiative – initiated by EIRMA and implemented jointly since 2005 by EARTO, EIRMA, EUA and Proton Europe – has achieved significant visibility and is recognised politically as an important contribution to improving research-enterprise cooperation and supporting the adoption of “open innovation” practices.

A stock-taking conference was organised by the four associations, under the auspices of the Portuguese EU Presidency, in December 2007 in Lisbon. It has confirmed the importance and value of the Responsible Partnering initiative, which will continue in 2008.

It is planned to organise a further stock-taking event within the COPENMIND exhibition in Copenhagen on 1st – 3rd September.

The Responsible Partnering organisations are currently discussing the preparation of guidelines to facilitate the implementation of the State Aid Framework for R&D&I.

■ INPUT TO COMMISSION GREEN PAPER ON *EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA*

The Commission’s Green Paper on the Future of the European Research Area was expected to be the major European research policy initiative in 2007, leading to structural changes which could be expected to take effect at the mid-term review of FP7. That timetable is no longer certain and the likely impact of the Green Paper debate is less sure.

EARTO responded to the Green paper with a contribution which emphasised:

- the need to raise the ERA debate politically and to agree a doubling of the European R&D budget as a short- to medium-term objective;
- to implement a European public procurement strategy in order to drive innovation;
- to focus increasingly on innovation rather than on R&D, and
- to take a stronger demand-side view when shaping policy.

EARTO was invited to speak at the Portuguese EU Presidency conference on the Green Paper in Lisbon in December 2007.

■ IP CHARTER

The German EU Presidency in the first half of 2007 launched an initiative for a set of guidelines to facilitate and improve research-enterprise interaction, targeting especially universities and public research organisations.

EARTO members have been active nationally and in European Commission Working Groups dealing with the IP Charter, and EARTO has convened its IP Task Force.

Our principal concern has been to argue against a Charter with constraining guidelines and in favour of a more strategic approach emphasising that active IP management in research organisations is critical to innovation, must take a long-term view, and needs to be conducted in a global context.

The inputs provided by the EARTO IP Task Force were largely adopted by the Commission in January and March 2008 and had a strong influence on the final document, which was published as a Commission Recommendation in April.

The Commission Recommendation, however, also contains a paragraph about the ownership of IP rights in contract research which is unacceptable for RTOs and discussions continue with the Commission in order to obtain improvement.

■ **ÆRTOS: AN RTO ERA-NET**

A group of EUROTECH RTOs, with help from the EARTO Secretariat, in 2007 prepared a successful proposal for an RTO ERA-NET project. This project will raise the profile of RTOs and is intended as a strategic exercise in exploring and implementing long-term transnational cooperation between RTOs.

ERA-NET projects serve to network national research programmes, with the objective of securing long-term cooperation and coordination between them.

ÆRTOs (*Associated European Research and Technology Organisations*) aims to explore the scope for long-term cooperation between RTOs in areas to be identified.

The ÆRTOs partners are FhG (Coordinator), CEA, SINTEF, TNO and VTT. The contract between the consortium and the Commission has not yet been finalised. It is intended that EARTO will be a subcontractor in the project with the role of facilitating the participation of additional RTOs in ÆRTOs cooperation activities.

ÆRTOs held its kick-off meeting in April 2008. The early months of the project will be devoted to a detailed analysis of the participating RTOs strategic activities and operational service portfolios as the basis for identifying first areas for developing long-term joint activities, the first of which should be launched later this year.

■ **DESCA, MEEUS**

The DESCA and Meeus initiatives, described below, have both served to further confirm EARTO as a key player on the European R&D and innovation policy scene.

■ **EUROPEAN COMMISSION EXPERT GROUPS**

• **Commissioner Potočník's Sounding Board for Smaller FP Actors**

EARTO was represented on the Sounding Board, which provided a valuable lobbying opportunity in the run-up to FP7. The Sounding Board's mandate ended in 2007.

In February 2008, the Commissioner announced his intention to prolong the mandate of the Sounding Board in 2008, in particular to monitor the implementation of FP7.

• **DG Research SME Advisory Group**

The mandate of this Commission Expert Group covers both the SME-specific measures of FP7 ("Research for SMEs" and "Research for SME Associations" as well as SME participation in the Thematic Priorities of FP7 (15% target). There are two EARTO members in the Group (which is chaired by the EARTO Secretary General).

• **Lisbon ERA Green Paper conference**

EARTO was an invited speaker at the EU Portuguese Presidency conference on the ERA Green Paper in Lisbon in October 2007.

• **Input to ERA Green Paper Expert Group on "ERA Rationales"**

EARTO has collected data on RTOs' transnational contract research activities in Europe in order to provide an empirical basis for a possible recommendation by the Expert Group for a new Commission initiative to stimulate transnational contract research in Europe.

The contact with the "Rationales of ERA" expert group has resulted in a proposal in the group's final report to the Commission for a Commission-funded scheme to provide a financial "bonus" on cross-order research contracts with industry.

- EARTO representatives and members are regularly invited to sit on other **ad hoc Commission expert groups**, e.g. several of the expert groups supporting the ERA Green Paper debate.

■ RTO OVERHEAD COST SURVEY

In March and April 2008 EARTO has updated its earlier surveys (2000, 2005) of RTOs overhead costs and working time. The results confirm the findings of the earlier surveys, e.g. average overhead costs of 148% of direct personnel costs. In addition, they show that a realistic figure for productive ("invoiceable") time is in the range 140-180 days.

■ FP7 BENCHMARKING SERVICE

EARTO launched a FP7 benchmarking database in April 2008. This will enable individual RTOs to compare their FP7 success against other RTOs, e.g. what percentage of project proposals pass the evaluation threshold, what percentage get accepted for funding. It will be possible to do this separately for each of the main programmes within FP7 (thematic priorities, ERC, SME measures, etc.).

■ EARTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 2007 EARTO Annual Conference took place in Munich on May 2nd and 3rd in the presence of 200 EARTO members and invited participants. Keynote speakers during the two-day event included European Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik, former German Minister for Research Edelgard Bulmahn, and Lars-Göran Rosengren, President and CEO, Volvo Technology Corporation.

The 2008 EARTO Annual Conference takes place in Madrid on May 29th and 30th, preceded by a meeting of the EARTO Working Group on May 28th.

■ EARTO WORKING GROUPS AND TASKS FORCES

EARTO Working Groups active in 2007 and 2008 included those on:

	2007	2008
• Spin-offs	✓	
• RTO Development Strategies	✓	
• Research Career Development Programmes in RTOs (workshop with YEAR and EIRMA)	✓	✓
• EUROTECH Working Groups on Security of Energy Supply and on Food and Food Safety	✓	✓

EARTO Task Forces active during the year included:

	2007	2008
• IPR Issues in FP Projects	✓	
• IP Task Force ("IPR Charter")	✓	✓
• Ex-post FP6 Audits	✓	✓

Some other meetings of members were also organised. A full list may be found below.

■ EARTO NEWS

EARTO News is an electronic newsletter produced by the EARTO Secretariat approximately once per month. It contains information about EARTO events, European policy developments of relevance for RTOs, and other information. 10 issues were published in 2007.

A reformatted version of EARTO News was introduced at the beginning of 2008, simultaneously with the release of the re-engineered EARTO website. Production of EARTO News is embedded in the new website. Publication is every three to four weeks. News of general interest to RTOs is uploaded to the EARTO website daily.

■ EARTO FACILITIES IN BRUSSELS

The EARTO Secretariat helps members in their contacts with the European Commission and with other European institutions and organisations. Typical requests for assistance concern obtaining documents, arranging appointments, advice about whom to contact, interpreting work programmes and calls for proposals, evaluation procedures, and complaint processes. We also help members establish their own presence in Brussels. The Secretariat maintains its own meeting rooms which are available for members wishing to organise events in Brussels. EARTO has two meeting rooms, which can accommodate up to 5 and 16 persons respectively. In addition, we have access to larger meeting rooms for up to 40 persons.

■ MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FP7

The Association has worked systematically since 2004 to obtain the best possible conditions for RTOs in the 7th Framework Programme (FP7).

EARTO was substantially involved in obtaining:

- 75% funding for R&D for non-profit research organizations (about 80% of EARTO members);
- the continuation of, and an increased budget for, the SME-specific measures ("Research for SMEs", "Research for SME Associations");
- the Mutual Guarantee Fund (MGF) for FP7 participants, which will remove the need for bank guarantees and reduce time-to-contract,
- no automatic access rights to foreground for affiliates of FP7 consortium partners, and
- no flat-rate funding of overhead costs.

Following the launch of FP7 in January 2007, the emphasis during the past year has been on monitoring the implementation of the Framework Programme and intervening where necessary with the Commission.

■ SME FUNDING MODEL

In the latter part of 2006, the Commission made public that it was intending to change the funding model of the SME-specific measures. The principal changes were that the research performer(s) in a project would in future invoice their services to the SME partners and that IP ownership rights need not necessarily be wholly transferred to the participating SMEs or SME associations.

EARTO has intervened, including in 2007, to try to ensure a "user-friendly" funding model. We argued successfully for a reinforced communication effort by the Commission and against confusing complexity (e.g. the proposed "double-ceiling" funding cap).

At the request of a large majority of members, EARTO has not supported proposals for 75% or 80% reimbursement of research performers in *Research for SME* projects, the remaining 20% or 25% being paid through royalties and/or success fees.

In 2008, some of the DESCA partners (see below) have produced a Model Consortium Agreement for *Research for SMEs* projects based on a 75%/25% model. EARTO did not support this work.

■ AUDIT CERTIFICATES IN FP6 COLLECTIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS

EARTO made a proposal to DG Research for a simplified system of audit certificates with regard to the costs of SME participants in FP6 Collective Research projects. Under the generally applied rules, the costs of obtaining certification can be very high relative to the actual expenditures involved. The EARTO proposal was for a simplified system involving sampling of expenditures and average costs. Our initiative was partially successful inasmuch as the Commission accepted an approach based on the centralisation of SME costs, and a single related audit, through the corresponding IAG (Industrial Association/Grouping).

■ **FP7 PROPOSAL REVIEW SERVICE**

With the start of FP7, EARTO launched its FP7 proposal preparation service, which offers members the services of four carefully selected, specialised consultancy organisations at a highly advantageous price. The service providers offer support from the initial planning of a proposal through to final preparation, including a critical review of the complete proposal before submission to the Commission.

■ **DESCA, MEEÛS**

EARTO has taken an active role in the DESCA initiative, in which a group of European and national organisations – ANRT, EARTO, Eurochambres, German CA-Team, UNITE – has jointly developed a set of Model Consortium Agreements for FP7 which are well attuned to the needs and interests of RTOs. EARTO hosts the DESCA website.

Meeûs is an Internet Discussion Forum which provides a facility for FP7 users to obtain advice and information from other FP7 users. The rationale for Meeûs is that the self-interest of the Commission can sometimes prevent it – and by extension also Commission-funded helpdesk services – from providing neutral advice about FP7 issues

Meeûs was initiated and is hosted by EARTO, with the endorsement of the other DESCA partners.

■ **EX-POST FP6 AUDITS**

It became evident during the summer of 2007 that the Commission has significantly increased the number and, it seemed, the severity of ex-post audits of FP6 projects. Several EARTO members signalled to the Secretariat that they had experienced challenging audits. EARTO accordingly established a Task Force to collect experience from members and to examine the issues being raised by auditors. This resulted in a letter to the Commission focussed in particular on:

- the use of average personal costs, and
- the definition of productive hours.

In response to our letter, the Commission offered a meeting with EARTO members. The meeting took place on February 13th between four Commission Heads of Unit and representatives of 10 RTOs. The issues for discussion were the use of average personnel costs and the definition of productive hours. The result was a seeming acceptance by the Commission of the use of average personnel costs, provided that an auditor would consider that the method employed approximated sufficiently to “real” costs. EARTO was promised written guidance on this issue. Regarding productive hours, the Commission continues to consider all working time to be productive.

EARTO MEETINGS IN 2007

MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting	May 3rd	Munich
Executive Board	May 2nd November 15th - 16th	Munich Malvern
Steering Committee	February 8th June 25th September 26th	Brussels Brussels Brussels

EARTO WORKING GROUPS, TASK FORCES, CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, ETC.

EARTO Working Group on Spin-offs	January 18th May 2nd	Berlin Munich
EARTO Working Group on RTO Strategies	January 10th March 7th	Brussels Brussels
The EARTO Working Group	May 2nd	Munich
The EARTO Annual Conference	May 2nd – 3rd	Munich
EARTO Workshop on SME Funding and IPR in FP7	May 23rd	Brussels
EARTO Workshop on IPR in EU Projects	June 26th	Brussels
EUROTECH Special Interest Group	March 25th – 26th October 14th – 15th	Ivalo Cadarache/Aix-en-Provence
EUROTECH Energy Group	September 6th	Brussels
EUROTECH Food Group	September 27th	Brussels
EARTO Task Force on IPR Issues	November 8th	Munich
EARTO/YEAR Working Group on Career Development Programmes	November 20th	Brussels
EARTO Task Force on FP6 Audits	December 10th	Brussels

OTHER IMPORTANT MEETINGS BY AND WITH EARTO IN 2007

DESCA Model Consortium Agreement	Launch event Consultation Group Consultation Group Core Group Presentation w/shop Consultation Group	January 17th March 6th March 29th May 7th June 22nd October 31st	Bonn Brussels Brussels Helsinki Brussels Paris
Innovation Conference		February 15th – 16th	Udine
DG Research SME Workshop		March 14th	Brussels
Evidence by EARTO on EIT to Joint Meeting of European Parliament's ITRE and CULT Committees		May 2nd	Brussels
Conference on Strategy and Role of R&D Organisations in Europe		May 18th	Warsaw
Hyperion FP7 Advisors Training Course		June 26th – 28th	Brussels
Responsible Partnering planning and review meeting		June 28th	Brussels
Alpbach Technology Forum		August 22nd – 24th	Alpbach
EU Presidency conference ERA Green Paper		October 8th – 10th	Lisbon
DG Enterprise "Implore" Innovation Conference		October 22nd – 24th	Berlin
Responsible Partnering Stock-taking Conference		December 3rd – 4th	Lisbon
DG Research SME Advisory Group		March 28th June 5th December 17th	Brussels Brussels Brussels

EARTO IN 2008: FIRST PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES

EARTO will continue in 2008 to follow the mission and strategy described earlier, carrying on established actions and launching new ones, as appropriate.

The following events and activities are currently foreseen for the first months of 2008:

EVENT / ACTIVITY	PROBABLE DUE DATE
Publish the "EARTO White Paper" on <i>RTOs in the Evolving European Research Area</i>	January
Release an updated EARTO website, offering an enhanced news function and additional information resources	January/February
Nominate candidates to the European Research Area Board (ERAB)	January
Nominate candidates for the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)	April
Update the EARTO Survey on RTO Overhead Costs	March/April
Launch an FP7 Performance Benchmarking service	April
Continue IP Task Force on the IP Charter	January 24th
Continue EUROTECH Energy Working Group	February 8th April 29th
Continue Career Development Working Group, possibly opened to other HR issues	June 17th
Launch an EARTO Working Group on Quality and Excellence in RTOs	June
The EARTO Annual Conference – "Impacting New Markets", hosted by FEDIT, Madrid	May 29th – 30th
EIRMA R&D Management Study Group – Invitation to EARTO members to participate in this EIRMA event	June 3rd – 6th

ANNEX EARTO'S MISSION AND STRATEGY

The current mission and strategy of EARTO, summarised in the following diagramme, were originally set by the EARTO Executive Board in 2004 and have been reviewed at intervals since, most recently in 2007. The conclusion of the most recent review was that the mission and strategy remain essentially valid, although it was recognised that limited progress has been made so far with regard to the strategic objective of promoting contacts with industry.

The Mission

1. Promote and defend the interests of RTOs in Europe

2. Provide added-value services to EARTO members

The Strategy

1. RTOs key-player category
2. European programmes attuned to interests of RTOs

1. Networking and exchange among members
2. European funding opportunities
3. Promote contacts with industry
4. Facilities in Brussels

1. PROMOTE AND DEFEND THE INTERESTS OF RTOs IN EUROPE

1. RTOs KEY-PLAYER CATEGORY

EARTO's key objective is to make policy decision-makers better aware of the important role which RTOs play in today's innovation systems and of how RTOs work with and complement the enterprise and higher education sectors.

Historically, RTOs have been poorly organised to promote their own cause, while business and the universities have been increasingly well represented and effective in voicing their interests. EARTO has been successful since 2000 in obtaining greater recognition for RTOs, but much remains to be done.

Indeed, raising awareness about RTOs is a never-ending task. One reason is the continual turnover of personnel in the Commission, Parliament and Council, with newcomers often having little or no knowledge of RTOs. Another is the existence of effective organisations lobbying for academic science, which can obscure or contradict RTO positions.

2. EUROPEAN PROGRAMMES ATTUNED TO INTERESTS OF RTOs

An important practical aspect of this work is seeking to ensure that European R&D and innovation programmes sufficiently address technology development, exploitation and practical application, and that funding mechanisms, eligibility rules and other conditions are attuned to the needs of RTOs.

Once programmes are launched, it is important to monitor their implementation in practice, for often "the devil is in the detail". Indeed, programmes are often adopted on the basis of compromise texts which provide general principles rather than precise definitions. These latter must then be determined during implementation.

2. PROVIDE ADDED-VALUE SERVICES TO EARTO MEMBERS

NETWORKING AND EXCHANGE AMONG MEMBERS

A core function of the Association is to provide the members with opportunities for networking and mutual exchange.

- The **EARTO Conference** is the main networking event in the annual agenda. It aims to provide members with analysis and insight on a topic of current interest to RTOs.
- **Working Groups** are where members meet to exchange professional experience on topics of mutual interest. Working Groups are generally of a limited duration; they may meet three or four times over a period of about twelve months, for example.
- **Task Forces** form to address critical policy issues affecting all or groups of members, in particular to formulate policy recommendations.
- **Special Interest Groups** are longer-term. They bring together members sharing a common interest and meet regularly with an agenda of their own choosing – experience exchange, joint business development, etc.
- **Workshops, Information Days** are also organised from time to time to provide information on, for example, new Commission programmes, funding models etc.
-

1. EXPLOITING EUROPEAN FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

EARTO aims not only to obtain European R&D and innovation programmes well attuned to the interests of its members but also to help the members to better exploit the funding opportunities thus obtained.

- EARTO has worked for many years with Hyperion Ltd. to provide **training courses** on obtaining FP funding and managing FP projects.
- At the start of FP7, EARTO launched its **FP7 proposal preparation** service, which offers members the services of four carefully selected, specialised consultancy organisations to provide support from the initial planning of a proposal through to final preparation, including a critical review of the complete proposal before submission to the Commission.
- The Association has worked with a select group of other European and national organisations – ANRT, Eurochambres, German CA-Team, UNITE – to jointly develop **DESCA**, a set of **Model Consortium Agreements** for FP7, which are well attuned to the needs and interests of RTOs. EARTO hosts the DESCAs website.
- Meeûs is an **Internet Discussion Forum** which provides a facility for FP7 users to obtain advice and information from other FP7 users. Meeûs was initiated and is hosted by EARTO, with the endorsement of the other DESCAs partners.

2. PROMOTE CONTACTS WITH INDUSTRY

EARTO seeks to promote contacts with industry – or, rather, with the enterprise sector more generally – in order to facilitate interactions which will promote effective innovation systems as well as business opportunities for members.

EARTO nurtures a cooperative relationship with **EIRMA (the European Industrial Management Research Association)** which serves to build generic relationships with industry.

3. FACILITIES IN BRUSSELS

The EARTO Permanent Secretariat in Brussels is the focal point of the Association, organises EARTO meetings and provides meeting facilities for members' own meetings (e.g. FP project meetings).

The Secretariat is available to help members individually in their dealings with the Commission, Parliament and with other European organisations.