

Spain Takes Over Presidency of EU Council

Spain has pledged to drive forward the realisation of the European Research Area (ERA) during its six-month Presidency of the Council of the EU, which started on January 1st. Innovation and equality are at the heart of the Spanish Presidency programme, explained Science and Innovation Minister Cristina Garmendia who added that "Promoting the construction of the ERA is key to the success of this programme.

It is only by having a common shared space for knowledge, the ERA, in which scientists and ideas can move freely, that research and innovation will be able to act as engines for economic and social progress over the coming decades", she writes. "For this reason, they should be at the heart of European Union policies."

Spain has identified three 'axes' to drive the ERA forward: integration, involvement and inclusion. The integration axis refers to the importance of integrating research and development (R&D) policies into other policies - and specifically into the EU's strategy for 2020. Through the involvement axis, Spain will seek to ensure that all instruments supporting R&D and innovation in Europe, whether they are regional, national or pan-European in nature, address the major challenges faced by society today. These include climate change, the search for new sources of energy, ageing and disease, and globalisation. Finally, the inclusion axis focuses on the role science and innovation can play in promoting social cohesion and tackling poverty and exclusion.

Writing on CORDIS, the Spanish Presidency explains that "Europe has the duty and the opportunity to lead the battle against inequality and to put science and technology to use in this fight". Looked at more broadly, Spain's priorities for the next six months include: consolidating Europe's social agenda, paying special attention to gender equality and the fight against domestic violence; getting out of the economic crisis; energy security and climate change; creating a safer EU, particularly with regard to the challenge of immigration; and enabling Europe to speak with its own voice on the international scene. Spain will head up the EU Council for the first half of 2010, before handing over the reins to Belgium on 1 July.

For more information, please visit: www.eu2010.es

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