

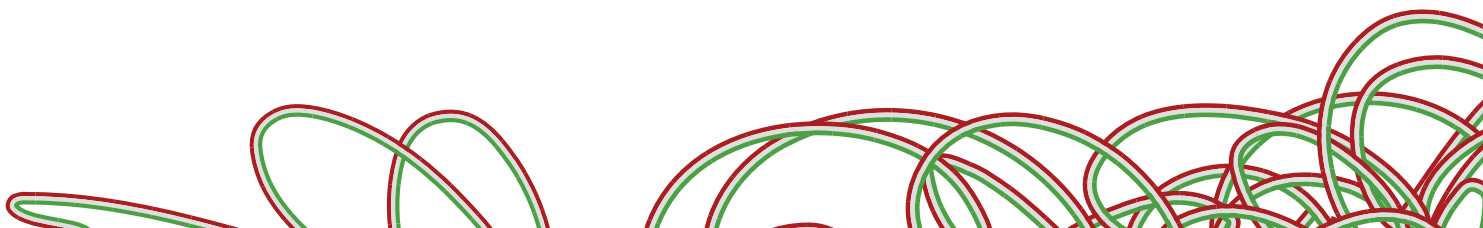
# DEBRECEN DECLARATION

Contributing to European competitiveness through integrated research and innovation policy  
**Clusters and research infrastructures working together**

Many of the challenges Europe is facing can be appropriately and efficiently tackled by raising European competitiveness and contributing to the European smart growth. To achieve this, we firmly believe that the European Union's research and innovation policy should provide adequate answers to the following key issues:

- ▶ ensure that innovative ideas can be transformed into products and services that foster growth and create jobs in Europe, as defined in the Europe 2020 strategy;
- ▶ develop a holistic approach to research and innovation policy in Europe through increased synergies between clusters and research infrastructures, which are key to a knowledge-based economy;
- ▶ raise innovation capability and performance in all regions with a view to avoid innovation gaps;
- ▶ encourage the design of smart specialization strategies through roadmaps where clusters and research infrastructures play a crucial role;
- ▶ attract the best researchers from around the world through competitive open access to high quality research infrastructures;
- ▶ foster the use and development of state-of-the-art e-infrastructure mediating and supporting the research and innovation processes in a stimulating e-science environment.

In order to steer the debate and propose recommendations to address these key issues, the conference 'Week of Innovative Regions of Europe 2011' (WIRE2011) was organised by the European Commission and the Hungarian Presidency of the Council, building upon the findings and conclusions of the 1st WIRE Conference organised in Granada in 2010. It stimulated intense discussion, following the framework of the 'EUROPE 2020 Strategy' and the flagship initiatives of 'Innovation Union' and 'Digital agenda', in order to contribute to European competitiveness by increased synergies between research and innovation policy and instruments, such as clusters and research infrastructures. It also aimed to draw attention of the European political leaders and research and innovation stakeholders on these issues. This declaration was enriched by the discussions of the stakeholders throughout the conference.



Consequently, the members of the conference agreed on the “Debrecen Declaration”, which goal is to contribute to European competitiveness through an integrated research and innovation policy.

We call for further actions both at European, Member State and regional levels regarding the above identified key issues:

- ▶ We reaffirm the European stakeholders’ determination to **strengthen the competitiveness of the EU economy and social development through the enhancement of Research & Innovation capabilities**. Since the regional cluster approach is becoming increasingly recognised as a valuable concept to foster economic and social development, new partnerships have to be developed between research infrastructures and clusters, facilitating the emergence of strong innovative European regions. This requires further efforts in developing new research infrastructures (RIs) and upgrading existing ones, including e-infrastructures, both at European and regional level.
- ▶ We need **synergies among European, national and regional policies in the field of Research infrastructures**. This requires: setting-up of European, Regional and National RIs registers based on quality evaluation and best practices; undertaking periodic updates of these registers (including the ESFRI Roadmap); establishing of regional RIs, including Regional Partner Facilities with the specific objective of making full use of the intellectual capital of all European regions; ensuring that e-infrastructures play an essential role as an integrating mechanism between Member States and regions, as well as between different scientific and technological areas; linking mobility schemes to improve access to RIs in Europe.
- ▶ We ask the European Commission to pursue its activities on **cluster policies**. Clusters are instrumental in the future for planning and implementing smart specialisation strategies at regional and national levels, for creating optimal framework conditions for existing and new emerging industries, for promoting excellence, and for connecting local and regional economies to the global economy through increased internationalization. The European Commission is invited to reflect on a new set of policy orientations and concrete policy measures for the new generation of cluster networks and alliances for the development of world-class clusters in Europe.
- ▶ We want to highlight the **regional dimension of the Innovation Union**, within the frame of the EU 2020 strategy, of which implementation requires a strong involvement of the regional and local stakeholders. Aligning Cohesion Policy with the objectives and targets of the EU 2020 Strategy will only be efficient if the regional authorities take ownership of their strategies, and are able to prioritise their R&D&I actions. The partnership approach at all levels of governance is a concrete outcome of the subsidiarity principle. The instrument of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) can ensure the regional involvement in the implementation of the Innovation Union as an efficient tool for multilevel governance.
- ▶ Regional and national public authorities should promote **Smart Specialisation Strategies** based on evidence of regional assets and capabilities and focusing on regional strengths, competitive advantage and a limited number of priorities. This requires making a regional assessment, catalysing partnerships between relevant stakeholders and fostering synergies when implementing the EU, national and regional policies. We welcome the setting up of the Smart Specialisation Platform by the European Commission aiming at providing methodological guidance and practical assistance to national and regional policy makers.
- ▶ We acknowledge a number of synergies between Structural Funds and Framework Programme funding for the design, preparation and construction of **Research Infrastructures**. We recognise, however, that this has not yet contributed to reducing the severe imbalances in RIs distribution in Europe. A stronger and more focused support for construction costs of regional RIs and for operation costs by the European Union, and pooling of national resources across a wider range of infrastructures, will be critical factors for sustainability. The European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) legal instrument should be used widely to link RIs, but new legal forms of partnerships such as EGTC should be also used for the creation of better linkages between RIs and regions.

