

Euroscience Open Forum
Opening Session, 25.08.2004

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Speaking points

Four and a half years ago, European Research Commissioner Mr. Philippe Busquin introduced the concept of building the "European Research Area". This idea has received an unanimous welcome by governments, the European Parliament as well as all major research organizations. But agreeing at institutional level is not enough: we need a corresponding response at grass root level and the Euroscience Open Forum is the ideal initiative for such a bottom-up approach to the ERA.

ESOF 2004 will give a voice to the scientific community, reinforced through the great interest of the media in this event. It will help the science to articulate its needs: science needs lobbying as much as does agriculture, for example.

This event is particularly timely, one the one hand with regard to the recent election of a new European Parliament and the upcoming change in the Commission, but in particular with regard to the Commission's ambitious targets for increasing significantly the European research budget and the preparation of the next Framework programme. It will not be easy to defend these against competing policies, both in terms of spending volume and content, and the voice of the scientific community is crucial to be heard.

I hope that this event will be a great success for all participants. The organizers, partners and sponsors have done their job, now it is up to you, the audience, to make the most of it. The European Commission continues to fully back this excellent initiative and I already congratulate Euroscience for their commitment to hold the next Forum in Munich in 2006.