

**Comments of the
Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres**
on the

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

‘A European strategy for Key Enabling Technologies – A bridge to growth and jobs’

The Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres generally welcomes the Communication on ‘A European strategy for Key Enabling Technologies – A bridge to growth and jobs’. This Communication lays down how Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) can be better used to give European industry the necessary boost to retain its technological leadership and [competitiveness in international settings](#).

1. Flexibility for future needs

We understand that it is necessary to prioritise and focus the attention of public support on those fields that are most crucial to the future European economic – and societal – well-being. Thus we support the selection of the six highly R&D intensive fields as ‘KETs’. However, the definition of KETs should be open to future development to include [other technology areas that may become key enabling ones](#) in the future. Here, for example, [life science technologies](#) may come to the forefront relatively soon. Thus, this Communication should not petrify the present state of the art, or even worse, let it become a basis for subsidising non-competitive development and entrepreneurship.

2. Lasting impact

Furthermore, we should not be tempted to focus our growth strategies primarily on possible short-term gains to the detriment of investment in longer-term stability and prosperity. Thus, we must emphasise that it is [fundamental technological research](#) which positively influences growth and employment in the long term, and which opens up future solutions that are not possible through an approach based on short-term industry gains.

3. Genuine industrial involvement

Furthermore, we strongly urge that the costs associated with building up any industrial pilot lines and similar deployment measures should be born [exclusively by the industry](#) interested in this development (for example using the instruments of EIB). Otherwise, we may start funding projects without any genuine industrial interest and without real market potential.

4. Impartial expertise

The present practice of the Commission, when establishing a new support title, is to consult relevant stakeholders. We applaud this approach but feel that the focus should not be solely on stakeholders with direct economic interests. Business and industry partners will of course propose topics where they are actively involved, but they fail to identify topics where they lack expertise and business involvement. Hence, more impartial stakeholders should be consulted, among them the relevant [experts from academia](#).

5. Harmonisation of measures

As far as individual measures are concerned, we welcome the effort of the Commission to harmonise support for the development and deployment of KETs in both [Horizon 2020](#) and the [Structural Funds](#) (earmarked funds for smart specialisation), complemented with innovative [financial instruments](#) offered by EIB.

6. Future generation of experts

Finally, we also share with the Commission very much its concern about the need to invest more in [education and training](#) of future generations of experts and skilled workers to meet the future needs of the European economy.

Brussels, September 27th, 2012

The Helmholtz Association is Germany's largest scientific research organisation. A total of 33,634 staff work in its 18 scientific-technical and biological-medical research centres. The Helmholtz Association participates in many European projects – often in a coordinating role – and benefits considerably from the established instruments of the Framework Programme of the European Union for Research and Technological Development. The instruments and actions of the Framework Programme contribute significantly towards supporting networking and collaboration between the scientists of the Helmholtz Association and researchers throughout Europe. They facilitate as well activities which cannot be realised at the national level or which provide added value in the form of collaborations at the European level.