



## ***Demand Driven Innovations through Triple Helix Cooperation in Chemical Regions***

**Congress Declaration  
11<sup>th</sup> ECRN Congress**

**Maastricht, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

On the occasion of the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN), the network presents the following declaration to voice the common interests of the chemical regions regarding competitiveness, cooperation, and innovation in the chemical industry and in European regions.

### **(1) Industrial Policy and Europe 2020**

- (a) As outlined in our strategic position to the EU Industrial Policy<sup>1</sup>, ECRN supports the EU approach for an integrated, modern industrial policy. An industrial policy that brings together economic, environmental and social policy strategies is central to long-term prosperity in Europe.
- (b) Moreover, we fully agree on the importance of a strong industrial base in Europe. The chemical sector is one of the cornerstones of European industry. As an important enabling industry, it has spill-over effects on other sectors and the rest of the economy. In addition to its strong global position, the chemical sector forms the backbone of numerous regional economies.
- (c) The Europe 2020 framework provides excellent guidelines for a sustainable and intelligent growth in an integrated Europe. However, the success of achieving the 2020 goals will greatly depend on decision-making and implementation at local and regional level. The policies implemented in the regions play a distinct role in supporting the competitiveness of the European chemical industry<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *European Chemical Regions Network: Strategic Position to Europe 2020 flagship initiative on industrial policy – Taking the opportunity for a new integrated industrial policy to foster economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development in Europe (June 2013)*

<sup>2</sup> *As illustrated e.g. in the European Commission's report on 'Analysis of policies in chemical regions to support the competitiveness of the chemicals industry', available on the website of DG Enterprise and Industry:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/chemicals/files/sustdev/chemical\\_regions\\_final\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/chemicals/files/sustdev/chemical_regions_final_report_en.pdf)*

- (d) In policy development, it is necessary to ensure a strong long-term vision in strategy and implementation, and to analyse and evaluate consequences and impacts of decision to achieve sustainable solutions and results.
- (e) Stressing the importance of cooperation and effective implementation of policies at regional level, ECRN calls for:
- Efficient dialogue between different levels of decision-making and a broad range of stakeholders
  - Cooperation with regional representatives in development of European policies
  - Maintenance of subsidiarity as the guiding principle for European policy activities and acknowledgement of regional competences in the European context

## **(2) Smart Specialisation, Horizon 2020, EU Funding**

- (a) ECRN welcomes the principle of promoting local strengths and Smart Specialisation in the EU Cohesion Policy for 2014-2020, as it enables regions to attend to their particular needs and conditions and address them in a tailored way. Evidence-based policy design and regionally relevant strategic priorities are necessary to maximize the knowledge-based development potential of European regions.
- (b) We also support the link between Smart Specialisation and investments on research and innovation. The new Cohesion Policy and Smart Specialisation can facilitate strategic planning, efficient use of funds, and stakeholder collaboration, thereby also contributing to the EU 2020 goals.
- (c) It is important to continue to support value-added cooperation and partnerships addressing issues like innovation, clusters, logistics, energy and resource efficiency, green and sustainable growth, and training and skills development.
- (d) SMEs and entrepreneurialism need to be supported, and we welcome the dedicated EU measures targeted at SMEs, such as the new SME instrument in Horizon 2020 and facilitated access to funding. The needs of SMEs should be addressed coherently across policies and funding schemes. SMEs are often particularly innovative and competitive due to their dynamic and flexible business models, and this type of bottom-up innovativeness should be supported in all fields of science, technology, and innovation.
- (e) In this regard, ECRN urges for
- timely agreement on EU's Cohesion Policy Package, Horizon 2020 and the multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020
  - consistent implementation across all levels, from the European to the national and the regional

### **(3) Innovation and clusters**

- (a) Innovation processes in the chemical industry often take place in regional clusters involving the industry, universities, research centers and other partners. The 'triple helix' collaboration among private, knowledge and public actors has an integral role in fostering innovation and competitiveness.
- (b) ECRN members cover a broad range of cluster networks and technology transfer institutions with strategic partnerships all over the world.
- (c) The development of open innovation model for chemical industry is an interesting tool for the strengthening of innovation capacities at regional, national and European level. The concept of open chemical innovation should be integrated in the future innovation and cluster policy at European level.
- (d) Moreover, development of knowledge sites or research infrastructures capable of attracting investments from both public and private actors are excellent pre-conditions for further implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy.

ECRN wishes to emphasize the essential role of collaboration, exchange of experiences, and mutual learning in order to develop the most effective strategies to seize the opportunities and work towards the future in the industry and within regions.

As illustrated by the numerous examples of regional and inter-regional activities presented during the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress at the 'Market of Ideas'; collaboration within regions and between regions provide examples of how regional expertise, innovations and policies can be used as tools for strengthening the regions, their local innovation capacities, or providing input to smart specialization strategies. Additionally, experiences from interregional projects such as ChemClust (INTERREG IVC project) provide examples of how innovation capacities can be strengthened e.g. in clusters, chemical parks, or with open innovation strategies.

Our network is dedicated to enhancing interregional collaboration and cooperation across clusters through its own activities as well as in European projects. We strongly believe that networks like ECRN can play an integral role in providing a platform for engaging with chemical stakeholders and mutual learning.

We strive to continue to collaborate for the achievement of Europe 2020 goals, as well as for the development and prosperity of European regions.

11<sup>th</sup> ECRN Congress, Maastricht, 24.10.2013

*This declaration has been endorsed  
by the ECRN Executive Board  
in a board meeting on 23.10.2013*