

**13 February 2007**  
**Preparation for**  
**Fientje Moerman,**  
**Vice Minister-President and**  
**Flemish Minister for Economy, Enterprise, Science,**  
**Innovation and Foreign Trade**  
**(represented by Koen Verlaeckt)**

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*Title: "Open access: a "driver" for research and innovation"*

*Version 3 – 07/02/07 – Author: Nele De Belie – only the spoken word counts*

Dear participants,

It is my pleasure to open this Open Access day. Dissemination of knowledge has always been an important part of our policy. Access to and dissemination of scientific publications is a pre-condition for further research and for turning knowledge into innovative products and services.

Europe recognized the need for innovation when outlining the Lisbon agenda; quantitative goals were set during the European Council meeting in Barcelona in 2001. By the year 2010 Europe should invest on average 3% of GDP in research and development: 2% should be financed by business and 1% by government. The Flemish government included this initiative in its "innovation pact" in 2003. The Flemish government's priority was to provide substantial support for R&D in Flanders. They have set out a growth path for a rise in the R&D budget, so that the 1% objective can be achieved in 2010. Enormous efforts have

been made with regard to government expenditure: R&D expenditure has tripled since 1993! Moreover, efforts have continued during this legislative term: In 2006, the government invested approximately 0.78% of GDP in R&D.

Of course, providing more money for research is only one part of the story. Research is a key parameter, but does not necessarily lead to sufficient innovation. Furthermore, a more efficient national and regional innovation strategy is needed. Our policy is to combine increased financial support with a facilitating role for the government.

One important dimension of a modern innovation system is its openness. We should be aware of the fact that innovation is the result of intensive collaboration between different players in the fields of research and innovation. Researchers should act in an open research and innovation system! In a closed system, which according to Henry Chesbrough (Haas School of Business, Berkeley, CA) was the traditional system used in the past, every researcher is on his/her own, protecting his knowledge from academic or industrial “competitors”. This attitude is highly disadvantageous when innovation comes into the picture. On the other hand, in an open research and innovation system, the local and international exchange of ideas and knowledge creates incentives for innovation. Of course protection of knowledge may be important if we consider the protection of intellectual property rights and the creation of added economic value through patents. But both models can be complementary, even within a single domain or company.

The open access initiative can certainly help create an open innovation spirit. This was also recognized by the European Commission in its “Study on the economic and technical evolution of the scientific

publication markets in Europe” (published in January 2006). Like the European Science and Research Commissioner, Janez Potocnik, said: “It is in all our interests to find a model for scientific publication that serves research excellence”. This study is the result of a detailed analysis of the current scholarly journal publication market, together with extensive consultation with all the major stakeholders within the scholarly communication process. The study noted that “dissemination and access to research results is a pillar in the development of the European Research Area”. The recommendations made in the study should now be adopted, for instance the first recommendation was “to guarantee public access to publicly funded research results shortly after publication”.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I already mentioned, dissemination of knowledge has always been an important item in our policy. In our “Flanders i2010” action plan we have included the development of a distributed research information system. This system will extract current quality data directly from the sources where they are generated (for instance from the Fund for Scientific Research (FWO), from the Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology in Flanders (IWT), from the universities, etc.). This will guarantee high-quality, up-to-date content. The aim is to cluster not only all types of scientific research output, including publications, datasets, patents and prototypes, but also to list the scientific expertise of individual Flemish researchers, research projects, scientific equipment and infrastructure, scientific events, project calls and so on. In order to exploit and manage such information, sophisticated research information

systems are addressed. Examples can be found in Quebec and Brazil. The Flemish government and the Flemish universities were already aware of the importance of such systems in the eighties. They then installed the IWETO database, although it is currently too limited, not sufficiently up to date (because of “ex post” data collection) and not geared to current technological possibilities. Therefore, further efforts will focus on a new, distributed model, where each actor keeps his own information system, but which allows real time digital exchange with other actors. A leading example of such a system is the federal Social Security data exchange system, which received a good practice label from the European Commission in 2006.

Based on pilot cases tested in 2006, an action plan has now been sketched out to change the IWETO database into a fully fledged distributed research information system. And since the implementation of such a system not only comprises a technological challenge, but also a challenge in terms of processes and agreements on information exchange, all players involved in this process are carefully consulted.

This system will make it possible:

- to provide information on Flemish research to all players involved in the innovation process;
- to provide a measuring instrument for science and innovation policy makers;
- to simplify administrative procedures through e-government. For example the systems in Quebec and Brazil are widely used by researchers to keep their curriculum up to date in just one location; all institutes which need their curriculum can recover it there.

Because of her interest in an open research and innovation system, in the dissemination of knowledge and therefore in the open access initiative, minister Fientje Moerman was enthusiastic about signing the Berlin declaration.

It is my pleasure to be here today to hand the signed declaration over to the organizers.

Koen Verlaeckt, 13 February 2007