

## **E Foresee Conference 13<sup>th</sup> November 2003**

Opening Address HE Dr. Ronald Gallimore

Malta International eForesee Conference at the Hotel Corinthia San Gorg,  
Thursday, (13 November 2003).

Honorable Prime Minister, Honorable Parliamentarians, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the European Commission I would like to welcome you all here today at the opening session of this high level international conference to explore possible futures for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the increasingly key areas of research and innovation. In recent years, the strategic role of foresight in structuring the European Research Area has gained increasing recognition in Europe. This is reflected in the EU's Sixth Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Innovation which encourages the use of foresight across its whole range of thematic and horizontal sub-programmes. The eFORESEE Project was a fore-runner of this opportunity as it started under the Fifth Framework Programme as a STRATA project. EFORESEE reflects the potential for mutual learning in strategic policy design and formulation which can be tapped through the Framework Programme.

Indeed, there are often misconceptions that the Framework Programme only funds scientific and technological research projects, whereas the Programme actually supports strategic support for science and technology policy development. Foresight constitutes an innovative policy support tool, as by encouraging more long-term, participatory approaches to policy development, it provides policy-makers with strategic intelligence about future opportunities emerging from interactions between science, technology and society.

With its strategic use of foresight to help small economies (Cyprus, Estonia and Malta) to meet the accession challenge, the eFORESEE project highlights the opportunities for deploying foresight in different policy contexts. Indeed, the eFORESEE project followed another successful STRATA project, FOREN, which encouraged the use of foresight at the regional level in a number of EU member states. One of the key outputs of the FOREN project, the FOREN Guide, proved an indispensable tool for the eFORESEE teams as an introduction to foresight methodologies. This reflects the opportunities for mutual learning through the effective linking of projects and the transfer of experiences and best practices. We are here today to explore the possibilities for such an exchange of know-how and best practice on a wider Euro-Mediterranean level. Of course the challenges are greater but the same principles apply. The Commission is keen to encourage this kind of inter-project and inter-programme collaboration and knowledge sharing, since it ensure a more efficient use of Community resources.

The theme of this conference, the challenge of Euro-Mediterranean research and innovation futures, pre-empt what is no doubt a key topic for high-level talks between the EU and Mediterranean countries in the coming years. It is important to engage in this kind of discussion from now as it prepares the way by identifying high

potential areas of collaboration and the forms and types of cooperation that could work in the region. The recent launch of the EU's Wider Neighborhood Policy along with the existing EU instruments which support Euro-Mediterranean cooperation provide an excellent opportunity for starting up some pilot efforts in this respect.

We look forward to the results of these discussions and to their implementation through the new Wider Neighborhood Policy Programme as well as synergies with the other programmes. Malta's geo-strategic location at the center of the Mediterranean and its forthcoming accession to the European Union next May, makes it a prime venue for this and other international events.

I would like to close by congratulating the Malta Council for Science and Technology for their excellent work throughout this project and in organizing this conference so efficiently and I wish you a productive meeting and enjoyable stay in Malta.