



The EIROforum stand was packed with attendants as the EIROforum charter was signed.

inforced by the decision at the Barcelona summit in March 2002 to aim for a 50% increase in research spending in Europe, to reach the 3 % level of the GDP by the year 2010. One of the most important elements in the effort to revive European competitiveness in R&D is the concept of the European Research Area (ERA) and the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme is explicitly described as a tool to help facilitate the formation of the ERA.

Clearly, creating the ERA is a complex process with a diversity of actors and stakeholders. The conference provided a forum for discussions among all groups involved, from science ministers to the scientists themselves, who turned up in huge numbers.

The subjects under discussion included 'Research and Innovation', 'Human resources and mobility', 'European research in a global context', 'Infrastructures for the European Research Area' as well as 'Science and Society'. In parallel, 'how-to' seminars gave practical advice for scientists planning to seek project funding under the new Framework Programme.

Furthermore, the 'Participants' forum' comprised more than 80 workshops and events covering a wide spectrum of topics – from fusion research, genomics, 'e-science' and grid technologies to intellectual property rights and science communication.

### EIROforum and the ERA

One of the first tangible results of the ERA process was the collaboration between the European Intergovernmental Research Organizations (CERN, EFDA-JET, EMBL, ESA, ESO, ESRF, ILL), leading to the formation of the EIROforum. EIROforum has been active for a while and already achieved significant, practical results and the collaboration was formally sealed at the conference in Brussels. On Tuesday, November 12, the Directors General of the organizations signed the EIROforum Charter in the presence of Philippe Busquin, European Commissioner for Research, and numerous journalists. 'The establishment of EIROforum is a concrete example of

the dynamic created by the European Research Area. Europe has unquestioned excellence in science. By working together, Europe's leading research organizations can make that more visible on the European and world stage,' said Busquin in a press statement.

The signing of the charter was also marked by the launch of the EIROforum web site ([www.eiroforum.org](http://www.eiroforum.org)) and a brochure describing the aims and the specific elements of the collaboration.

### EIROforum at the Conference

Indeed, EIROforum maintained a high visibility at the conference. Representatives of the member organizations took part in several round-table discussions and workshops, and the EIROforum exhibition attracted many visitors and provided inspiring surroundings for many discussions. The EIROforum stand covered 400 square metres with an open-plan architecture, providing individual space for each of the seven member organizations and a centrally located common area for the EIROforum itself. The press event in connection with the signing of the EIROforum Charter took place directly on the stand.

### The ESO Stand

Featuring prominently on the 36 square metres ESO stand was a scale

model of the 100-m OWL telescope. It caught the attention of many visitors and was also shown in 'The Sixth Sense', the daily conference newspaper. Apart from the OWL project, subjects covered on the ESO stand were the VLT/VLTI and the ALMA project as well as those programmes for which the European Commission has provided major financial support, e.g. for Adaptive Optics, the Astrophysical Virtual Observatory (AVO) and the educational outreach programmes, notably 'Life in the Universe' and 'Physics on Stage'. Clearly, exposing ESO and its activities and future projects to such a huge, but select audience, was important, and the seven ESO staff that took turns on the stand had many interesting exchanges with the visitors.

'European Research 2002' sent a clear signal that the European research landscape is undergoing a major transformation, leading Le Figaro, the French daily, to talk about 'a new spirit for European scientists'. In two years time, when FP-6 reaches its half-term, the follow-up meeting, announced by Commissioner Busquin, will surely be able to determine to what extent this new spirit has produced tangible progress for European science.

## A Nobel Prize for Riccardo Giacconi



*Riccardo Giacconi has been awarded the Nobel Prize „for pioneering contributions to astrophysics, which have led to the discovery of cosmic X-ray sources“. In the words of The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, „he detected for the first time a source of X-rays outside our solar system and he was the first to prove that the universe contains background radiation of X-ray light. He also detected sources of X-rays that most astronomers now consider to contain black holes. Giacconi constructed the first X-ray telescopes, which have provided us with completely new – and sharp – images of the universe. His contributions laid the foundations of X-ray astronomy.“ (<http://www.nobel.se/>). Over the last two decades he has also been a leader in other fields of astronomy, and served as ESO's Director General over the years 1993–1999. ESO and its community send Riccardo their congratulations on this great honour.*