

**Draft Input for the Opening Address of the  
Austrian President Heinz Fischer**

**to the**

**VTT-JOANNEUM RESEARCH Workshop on**

**‘Urban Development’,**

**Helsinki, 9.September 2011**

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*Research isn't everything, but we will achieve little for future development without research. Moreover, we will achieve little if we do research in isolation instead of ever more intensive collaboration.*

*While this is true even for quite mundane types of research, it is paramount for research addressing the 'Grand Challenges' of our times. And the problems of Urbanization and the challenges to secure sustainable living conditions in Cities are truly among those challenges.*

*It is, we have to remind ourselves, for the first time in history that a majority of the world population lives in urban areas - and there is no abatement of this trend on the horizon.*

*But to really end up with a 'Triumph of The City' as the eminent researcher EDWARD GLAESER<sup>1</sup> has labeled our*

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<sup>1</sup> Professor at the Economics Department, Harvard University.

*era in his most recent book on the subject, we need to know a lot more about the dynamics of urban development, the means to cope with demographic and environmental pressures on our living conditions and suitable social and technological innovations to ensure productive and satisfying living in our cities.*

*Therefore, the topic of this workshop and the collaboration between two eminent Finnish and Austrian research organisations is indeed very timely and up to the challenge.*

*Thus, today's workshop is an excellent example not only for bilateral Austrian-Finnish collaboration in research and technological development - in this case between the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT) and JOANNEUM RESEARCH, two of the leading applied*

research institutes not only in their respective countries but also in Europe – but *in several aspects also for the coming shape of future Research and Development collaboration in Europe:*

- On the one hand, VTT and Joanneum Research have established quite *a number of joint research projects, most of them in the context of European ‘Research and Technology Development’ projects.* Both VTT and Joanneum Research are among the public research institutes with the highest share in European projects in Europe. Most of these projects are carried out in collaboration with Austrian and Finnish enterprises, as the presence of a number of these collaboration partners testifies. We sincerely hope that this workshop will be a good occasion for further exchange and deepening of these contacts.

But VTT and Joanneum Research have already *gone beyond the collaboration on the level of individual projects* (which is quite common in Europe today):

- Not only have VTT and Joanneum Research - with their respective policy research institutes - entered *a strategic partnership including other European Partners*<sup>2</sup> [to which Mr. Lämpävouri<sup>3</sup> referred to already in his speech].

This in itself is a novel and unique form to collaborate among European public research organizations and a potential role model for an ever closer collaboration among national research institutions in Europe.

- Moreover, they are also *prominent drivers behind an emerging new form of policy and research coordination in Europe, namely the ‘Joint Programming Initiatives’ (JPIs) to address ‘grand challenges’ for our societies.*

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<sup>2</sup> [like the Dutch TNO and TECHNALIA from Spain in the form of the ‘JOINT INSTITUTE FOR INNOVATION POLICY’ (JIIP)]

<sup>3</sup> Vorsitzende des Board vom Joint Institute for Innovation Policy (JIIP). Er wird dieses Joint venture gebührend erwähnen.

(like climate change, demographic change, food security, future means of energy supply and mobility), in which for the first time coordination of concrete policy measures in research and technological development on the European level is to be established in a bottom-up manner directly between the EU's member states.

I am happy to see Finland and Austria aligning their efforts in a number of these Joint Programming Initiatives'.

I'd like to particularly mention *the 'Joint Programming Initiatives' which deal with the Future of Urban Development in Europe*. In these initiatives Austria<sup>4</sup> has taken a leading role, with Finland being a very prominent supporter and member of the Governing Board.

This 'Joint Programming Initiative' is currently in its pilot phase, but already attracts the attention of an increasing

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<sup>4</sup> As represented by the Ministries for Transport, Innovation and Technology and the Ministry for Science and Research.

number of countries of the respective research communities, of cities and regions and also of enterprises. I'd like to mention that so far 13 European countries have indicated their support for this initiative.

Indeed, Cities and Urban areas today are focal points for addressing some of the grand challenges that our societies are facing: new infrastructures like

- 'smart grids' are about to revolutionize our ways of distributing and accounting for energy consumption,
- new ways of guiding individual and collective means of transport are needed to cope with congestion and pollution.
- The same holds for new approaches to housing and construction which should aim at providing agreeable habitats to elderly people through means of 'ambient assisted living' and

- other technological developments which will shape city life of the future.

These challenges call for a number of technological advances which are in the focus of the Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe. But I am also happy to see that the research this Joint Programming Initiatives envisages is not solely focused on technological development in a narrow sense. One of its main pillars is research into

- demographic change and migration which will shape the patterns of settlements in our cities and will have an impact on social cohesion,
- new governance and collaboration models for cities, regions and nations, which is a much needed ‘social innovation’ given the systemic nature of the problems and the current compartmentalization of our political structures,

- new planning tools for urban development which will at the same time make use of the new ways of data gathering and use (e.g. by tracking personal mobility) and secure privacy and data protection.

Here, I name just a few challenges which call for very practical and applied social science's research.

As I see from the topics of the VTT–JOANNEUM RESEARCH collaborations, these intrinsically intertwined topics of technological development and social change are well covered in the research program of this Joint Programming Initiative.

Austria and Finland will work together to make this initiative a successful one and will foster the new forms of collaborations of which – as said in the beginning – this workshop is a telling example.

I wish you great success in further advancing these collaborations and I assure you of my full support of it.