KEN-2011 Resolution

Human Capital Development for Knowledge Economy: Mobilising Innovation Potential – including Gender Balance

1. Awareness of the importance of knowledge economy in the domains of tertiary education, R&D, innovation, and entrepreneurship is growing, but only some countries and regions have achieved important results. In spite of declarations, most countries and regions fail to confirm their commitment through effective action and necessary reforms creating a growing implementation deficit.

2. Following the evolution of knowledge economy debate, the creation of KEN (successor of EREF) as a global network, was a natural and logical step in the direction of enabling existing and future members to better mobilize their resources for both internal restructuring and for closer international collaboration with the aim of strengthening knowledge-based competitiveness.

3. Scope of changes required to achieve smart, inclusive and sustainable development demand a new paradigm and an important shift in our mindset. Modern democracies leave very limited space for political voluntarism. More active involvement of civil society, including experts and professional public will contribute to better quality of legislation and decision-making in general.

4. Intensified global competition requires that organizations permanently use peer review and benchmarking through objective, scientifically verified criteria and indicators.

5. Corporate Social Responsibility is not only a moral category but an imperative for sustainable development and economically viable corporate governance - not only in the long run, but even in short-term business perspective. Besides responsible performance of managers, it is important that regulatory framework and policy instruments effectively reward proper conduct and penalize those who disregard vital interests of their immediate and broader societal environment.

6. Risk and venture capital are essential instruments of supporting early stage innovative enterprises and they depend primarily on general investment conditions and entrepreneurial culture. Regional and national authorities have to create measures stimulating capital formation and readiness to invest, as well as to nurture e risk taking and destigmatize business failure.

7. A large part of present day tertiary education does not fully reflect the current and future needs of labor markets, let alone human capital requirements of knowledge economy. The urgently needed changes can be achieved only through open dialogue and closer collaboration among universities, business and other social actors and authorities. Cooperation among universities at macroregional level on designing and implemented EU wide area strategies in the EU 2020 perspective can also play a pivotal role.

8. Regional innovation policy has to be an organic part of development strategy, corresponding to specific conditions and opportunities, paying particular attention to human capital. Due to their
proximity to key stakeholders, the regions are in an advantageous position to mobilize and involve them in formulating and implementing instruments of innovation policy, thanks to EU cohesion policy made available for all European regions in the next programming period. These instruments have to be consistent with EU and national framework policies (namely EU 2020) and regulations, but should also provide additional specific measures to respond to particular needs and conditions in the respective region.

9. Gender equality is not only a question of fundamental rights, but an economic necessity. In the decision-making processes women are highly underrepresented and this certainly does not contribute to the quality of decisions, be it in politics, business or other domains of public life. Knowledge Economy Network endorses the “Women on the Board Pledge for Europe” and recommends companies to follow this important initiative of Vice President of the European Commission Viviane Reding.

10. The process of gradual integration of Southeastern Europe into the EU is very incremental, and orientation towards knowledge economy carries double benefits: it facilitates economic integration, and contributes to making a stronger, more competitive Europe. Additional efforts on both sides are urgently needed. Regional development agencies in the area have an important role in this process.

11. Diminishing European competitiveness is partly also the consequence of slow pace of integration. By increasing the efficiency of its integration Europe will also regain its attractiveness for future candidates, including those in SE Europe.

12. Forum-2011 participants supported the proposal for the topic of Forum-2012 to be “Partnerships as key-factor for Knowledge Economy” (or “Building Knowledge Economy through partnerships”). The Forum will take place in Maribor, Slovenia on 11-12 June 2012, while the preparatory workshops should be organized with partners between November 2011 and April 2012.