



Brussels News Update

December 2010

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EuCheMS Expert Group responds to Nano-Definition Consultation

EuCheMS has recently established an Expert Group on Nanosciences and technologies; the Group involves leading experts in this field. The Commission's definition of a nanomaterial is a material that meets at least one of the following criteria: consists of particles, with one or more external dimensions in the size range 1nm – 100nm for more than 1% of their number size distribution; has internal or surface structures in one or more dimensions in the size range of 1nm – 100nm; has a specific surface area by volume greater than 60m²/cm³, excluding materials consisting of particles with a size lower than 1nm.

EuCheMS welcomed the inclusion in the definition of the 'internal or surface structures' as this is particularly important if the behaviour of nanomaterials throughout their lifecycle is considered. EuCheMS also pointed out that the cut off points of 1nm and 100nm are somewhat arbitrary and suggested that a proviso of 'usually described as...' be added. For example, a material could be just over 100nm and demonstrate physical properties associated with 'nanomaterials'. EuCheMS also pointed out that the use of a material should depend on its physical properties and the use to which it is put, underlining the importance of understanding the actual use and exposure presented in a material's use.

Source: www.euchems.org/News

FP7 Interim Evaluation Report

EuCheMS submitted a response to the Commission's mid-term evaluation on the performance of FP7 which also considered the development FP8. The Commission's interim evaluation Expert Group has published its report which makes ten recommendations on the future framework programme.

1. To advance ERA and Innovation Union objectives, 'requires new thinking', according to the Expert Group. The Expert Group also wants to see a sharper division between EU and national programmes.
2. On infrastructure there needs to be coherence between what is funded by FP7, measures funded by the Structural Funds and infrastructure proposed as a result of Joint Programming. More efforts should be made to stimulate industrial and third country access.
3. The level of funding should, at least, be maintained. The group state that there is a compelling case for continued substantial funding of research in FP8, as one of the key tools to achieve the Europe 2020 goals. The percentage of the total EU budget that FP7 will have when it ends should be regarded as a minimum.
4. A well-articulated innovation strategy needs to ensure that instruments and priorities encourage participation from a broad spectrum of small and large enterprises, universities and research and technology organisations.
5. Simplification needs a quantum leap, and the Expert Group calls for all Directorates- General and agencies rapidly to implement the short-term simplification measures. The Group 'pleads for the Commission to switch from its present low-risk/low-trust attitude to a more trust-based and risk-tolerant approach'.
6. The mix of funding measures in FP7 and successor programmes should strike a different balance between bottom-up and top-down approaches to research. It is also important to ensure that education does not become the forgotten side of the Knowledge Triangle.
7. A moratorium on new instruments should be considered.

Recommendations 8, 9 and 10 deal with women's involvement, increased participation of all EU countries and a stronger international dimension, respectively.

Source : <http://ec.europa.eu/research>

Europe 2020 Flagship - Integrated Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era

One of seven flagship initiatives, the Integrated Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era, sets out a strategy that aims to support a strong, diversified and competitive industrial base in Europe offering well-paid jobs while becoming less carbon intensive. The Communication is accompanied by a report on the competitiveness performance of individual Member States and the annual European Competitiveness Report.

The proposed actions in the Communication will focus on: Explicit and thorough "competitiveness proofing" of new legislation; "Fitness checks" of existing legislation; a strategy to strengthen European standardisation; supporting SMEs by facilitating access to finance and helping their internationalisation; a new strategy on raw materials; sector-specific innovation performance addressed through actions in sectors such as advanced manufacturing technologies, construction, bio-fuels and road and rail transport, particularly in view of improving resource efficiency; challenges of energy-intensive industries that will be addressed through actions to improve framework conditions and support innovation; developing an industrial covering the whole supply chain; annual reporting on Europe's and Member States' competitiveness, industrial policies and performances.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise>

ERC – Council of the European Union calls for more excellence

The European Research Council, was praised in the recent mid-term evaluation of the FP7. The ERC has been further strengthened by the Council of the European Union conclusions that the role of the European Research Council (ERC) in promoting excellence should be strengthened. This statement was part of the conclusions adopted by the Council after its meeting on 26 November, which focused on the EU's Innovation Union Flagship (October *Brussels News Update*).

Source: <http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/ERC>

Marie Curie Programme funds its 50,000th researcher

The EU's Marie Curie Action Programme celebrated its 50 000th beneficiary, at a conference in Brussels. The event was opened by European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, together with European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek and Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, who has overall responsibility for the Marie Curie programme, as the programme is now within the remit of DG Education and Culture. The action was launched in 1996, by 2013 the number of Marie Curie researchers is expected to hit 90,000.

The countries hosting the highest number of Marie Curie researchers since the programme's launch are the United Kingdom, followed by Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Italy. However, interest in the programme is increasing all over Europe; the total number of grant applications has increased by 65% in the past three years.

Commissioner Vassiliou said, "The Marie Curie Actions programme produces brilliant researchers, who are at the heart of the knowledge-based economy Europe is aiming for. It enables our most promising researchers to gain experience abroad, in Europe and beyond, and it allows us to attract the best young researchers from outside the EU so that Europe can benefit from their talents."

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases1>

Europe 2020 Strategy - implementation report, resource efficiency

An implementation report on developments under each of the EU's 7 Flagship Initiatives, has been prepared. The report was prepared by the Presidency in close cooperation with the Commission and the incoming Presidency, it provides an overview of work undertaken since the launch of the Europe 2020 strategy by the June European Council.

The report outlines progress in each area. Whilst the Resource-Efficient Europe flagship is not yet available it is expected in early 2011. Some preparatory discussions have already taken place over the last few months with a discussion on "Sustainable Materials Management". This instrument is designed to take an integrated and comprehensive approach to raw material exploitation, design, production and distribution, consumption, waste prevention and processing. At the Environment Council on 20th December, Council conclusions are to be adopted on "sustainable materials management and sustainable production and consumption: key contribution to a resource-efficient Europe".

Source: <http://www.era.gv.at/space/11442>

Reorganisation DG research – DG research and innovation

DG Research has officially become 'DG Research and Innovation' reflecting the European Union's renewed commitment to innovation through the Innovation Union Flagship. This has resulted in changes to the organisation of the DG. There will be three broad areas in the DG, each with its own Deputy Director General, namely: Framework Programme, policy and management; Innovation and ERA (European Research Area); and, Research Programmes.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/research4>

Is an oil free future possible? - Annual Lecture, Science Technology Options

STOA, the Science Technology Options Assessment Unit of the European Parliament recently organised its annual lecture. The subject this year was, 'Is an oil free future possible?' -The science, technology and economics of running Europe without oil'. For a copy of presentations please contact the office. The lecture involved two Chemistry Nobel Prize winners. Prof Dr Paul Crutzen, Max-Planck-Institute for Chemistry, Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1995, "Atmospheric Chemistry and Climate in the Anthropocene" and Prof George Olah, University of Southern California, Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1994 (via video interview) "Technological carbon cycle based methanol economy for a sustainable future".

Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa>

European Medicines Agency – access to documents

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has published its new policy on access to documents related to medicines for human and veterinary use. The new policy is part of the Agency's response to increasing public demand for more openness and transparency. According to Noël Wathion, Head of Patient Health Protection at the EMA, "Openness and transparency are enshrined as fundamental values in the Agency's regulatory framework (this) allows our stakeholders to understand the basis for the Agency's scientific decision-making and provide for the basis on which patients and healthcare professionals can have confidence in our opinions and information relating to medicines."

Source : <http://www.ema.europa.eu/ema1>

ERC - Change to rules

The Commission have adopted a decision to make small changes to the ERC rules for the submission of proposals and subsequent evaluation. The changes concern the appointment and reimbursement of independent experts and Principal Investigators invited for interview.

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/Lex1>

Patents: EU overcomes impasse with 'enhanced cooperation'

The European Commission has proposed a process of 'enhanced cooperation' to create unitary patent protection in the EU. As discussions were blocked by some countries on linguistic grounds it was impossible to reach unanimity. The unitary patent protection would allow those countries

that desired to agree to establish a patent, to progress, the patent created would be valid in all participating countries, and could be obtained with a single application

Enhanced cooperation has been requested by 12 countries, namely : Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. It is hoped that over time other countries will join.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction2>

Compendium: results of EU-funded research on genetically modified crops

In order to help inform debate on genetically modified organisms, the European Commission has published a compendium entitled "A decade of EU-funded GMO research", summarising the results of 50 research projects addressing the safety of GMOs for the environment and for animal and human health. Launched between 2001 and 2010, these projects received funding of €200 million from the EU and form part of a 25-year long research effort on GMOs.

European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Máire Geoghegan-Quinn said "The aim of this book is to contribute to a fully transparent debate on GMOs, based on balanced, science-based information. According to the findings of these projects GMOs potentially provide opportunities to reduce malnutrition, especially in lesser developed countries, as well as to increase yields and assist towards the adaptation of agriculture to climate change. But we clearly need strong safeguards to control any potential risks. "

According to the projects' results, there is, as of today, no scientific evidence associating GMOs with higher risks for the environment or for food and feed safety than conventional plants and organisms.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases3>

Eurostat – environmental facts and figures

Eurostat have published "Environmental statistics and accounts in Europe" to complement the European Environment Agency's , assessment "European environment - state and outlook 2010", published at the end of November. The publication has a special focus on the impacts that European households have on the environment. Eurostat underline that statistics are increasingly important for the definition, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of environmental policies, in particular, give the commitment to sustainable growth and resource efficiency in the European Union' 2020 vision. The statistics cover many areas, examples include: the share of fresh water resources is being abstracted each year; the share of GDP given to environmental taxes; the figures on the most waste per capita generated; how much fertilizer is consumed in agriculture.

Source : <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

CHEMICALS UPDATE

Global portal to information on chemical substances

A new version of the eChemPortal has been launched yesterday by OECD. It provides free public access to information on more than 600 000 records on chemical substances, collected from the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), as well as many other organisations including: the United States, Canada, Japan, the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA). The new portal greatly improves search functions and allow users to search by chemical property, in addition to a search by substance name and identification number. Other data include environmental fate and behaviour, ecotoxicity and toxicity.

Source: <http://www.echemportal.org/echemportal>

Chemicals Agency identifies sixteen substances of very high concern

The European Chemicals Agency's (ECHA) Member State Committee (MSC) agreed unanimously on the identification of eight Substances of Very High Concern (SVHCs) that may become subject to authorisation and are now on a 'candidate list'. The Committee also gave a favourable opinion to the ECHA's draft recommendation for adding eight new substances to the Authorisation List.

Candidate List, the eight identified SVHCs are: Chromium trioxide, acids generated from chromium trioxide and their oligomers, cobalt(II)sulphate, cobalt(II)dinitrate, cobalt(II)carbonate, cobalt(II)diacetate, 2-methoxyethanol and 2-ethoxyethanol, which are either carcinogenic, mutagenic or reprotoxic (CMR) substances.

Authorisation List, the following eight SVHCs will be subject to authorisation: di-isobutylphthalate (DIBP), diarsenic trioxide, diarsenic pentaoxide, lead chromate, lead sulfochromate yellow (C.I. Pigment Yellow 34), lead chromate molybdate sulphate red (C.I. Pigment Red 104), tris(2-chloroethyl)phosphate (TCEP) and 2,4-dinitrotoluene (2,4-DNT).

Source: <http://www.echa.europa.eu/news5>

REACH update on in vitro testing

The Commission have updated the REACH Regulation to include two new in vitro test methods for ocular irritation recently adopted by the OECD, in order to obtain a reduction of the number of animals to be used for experimental purposes

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/2>

Food Safety Agency publishes first opinion on recycled plastics

EFSA (the European Food Safety Agency) has published its first opinion on recycled plastics that are in contact with food. The EFSA concluded that there is no safety concern for the consumer if the process is run in a product loop which is in a closed and controlled chain under the conditions described by the applicant. They also recommended that it should be verified periodically, as part of the good manufacturing practice. EFSA has received various applications in this area and more scientific opinions will be delivered in the future.

Source: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en>

Food Safety Agency risk for children from nitrate in leafy vegetables

EFSA (the European Food Safety Agency) has assessed the possible health risk for children from nitrate in leafy vegetables. EFSA's Panel on Contaminants has published a statement on the possible acute health effects of nitrate in infants and young children consuming spinach and lettuce. The Panel concludes that levels of nitrate in these vegetables are not of health concern for most children.

Source: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en1>

European Medicines Agency update for November

The most recent medicines update is now available. The European Medicines Agency carries out scientific evaluations and prepares scientific opinion on medicines. The opinion is sent to the European Commission which issues a Decision and grants a marketing authorisation. Many new opinions on the new medicines have recently been published, including medicines for the following purposes: Parkinson's disease; narcolepsy; the treatment of major depressive episodes; for the diagnosis of suspected malignant lung tumours; immunisation against influenza in an officially declared pandemic situation; treatment of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV); and treatment of hereditary angioedema.

Source: <http://www.ema.europa.eu/ema2>

FUNDING UPDATE

EU-Canada Programme for co-operation in Higher Education

The EU-Canada Programme for Co-operation in Higher Education, Training and Youth Transatlantic Exchange Partnerships — Transatlantic Degree Partnerships aim to promote mutual understanding between the peoples of the European Union and Canada including broader knowledge of their languages, cultures and institutions and to improve the quality of human resources in the European Union and Canada. Activities should start by 1 October 2011.

Eligible actions include: Transatlantic Exchange Partnerships (TEP) to enable EU-Canada consortia of higher education institutions and training institutions to carry out joint study and training programmes and to implement student and faculty mobility; Transatlantic Degree Partnerships (TDP) to develop and implement dual/double or joint degree programs.

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ>

BUSINESS UPDATE

€5 Million State Aid CO₂ Pipeline, the Netherlands

The European Commission has authorised, a €5 million investment aid for a pipeline infrastructure to transport waste CO₂ from a bioethanol plant in Rotterdam to greenhouses in the “Zuidplaspolder”. The waste CO₂ will be used to enhance crop growth, the aid favours the recycling of waste CO₂ from local industry without unduly distorting competition. It reduces greenhouse gas emissions and increases the level of environmental protection in the EU."

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction3>

Commission authorises Sweden to Grant €24 Million for Biofuel Research Project

The European Commission has authorised Sweden's to grant to the Gothenburg Biofuels Gasification (GoBiGas) research and development (R&D) project. Göteborg Energi AB, a Swedish energy company, will manage the project, which will be carried out by its subsidiary, GoBiGas AB. The objective of the project is to develop a pre-commercial demonstration plant for the gasification of forest residue. The EU notes the positive effects for the EU, notably increased research activities, environmental protection and security of energy supply. "

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction4>

Commission clears €15.5 Million aid for Sovello's Solar Modules Plant in Germany

The European Commission has authorised €15.5 million of regional investment aid for the German company Sovello AG for the production of solar modules in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany. The project involves an investment of €147 million and is expected to create at least 320 new jobs in the region. Germany limited the aid amount to the maximum allowable under EU state aid rules, the Commission concluded that, on balance, the positive effects of the investment on regional development outweigh potential distortions of competition induced by the aid.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction5>

EIB finance Enzyme Research with Novozymes A/S, Denmark

Novozymes, the Copenhagen-based industrial enzymes company, will receive a European Investment Bank (EIB) financing facility for its research, development and innovation activities. The financing facility is aimed at projects in enzymes, novel proteins and micro-organisms. Novozymes is the world's largest producer of industrial enzymes.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction6>

EIB Loan €120 million to Danisco for food and enzyme research

Danisco, one of the world's top food ingredient and enzyme companies, will obtain European Investment Bank (EIB) funding of EUR 120 m for research, development and innovation investments. The EIB loan will part-finance investments at corporate research and innovation centres in Denmark, Finland, the United Kingdom and France. The company is the second largest producer of industrial enzymes. Danisco's research is in line with the objectives of the European Union's "food for life" platform under the 7th framework programme. These objectives include developing an environmentally friendly production and distribution chain.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction7>

JOBS UPDATE

Traineeships - European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)

The European Chemicals Agency's (ECHA) based in Helsinki is looking for newly-qualified graduates who are willing to make a contribution to the everyday work of ECHA. ECHA offer up to 20 traineeship opportunities per year in diverse areas relating to the core activities of ECHA, such as chemistry, human or environmental toxicology, biology, environmental science, environmental technologies, chemical/process engineering.

Source: <http://echa.europa.eu/opportunities>

CONSULTATIONS

Pilot European Innovation Partnership on active and healthy ageing

The European Commission is seeking the views of public and private organisations, companies and citizens on how Europe could scale up innovation to meet the challenges of the ageing population in Europe, and in particular on a pilot European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on active and healthy ageing. Between 2010 and 2030, the number of Europeans aged over 65 will rise by nearly 40%. The EIP will aim, among other things, to improve the health and quality of life of older people and enable them to live active and independent lives. Deadline : 28th January 2011

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/health>

Stakeholder consultation setting targets for bio-waste recycling

The Commission adopted on 18 May 2010 a Communication on future steps in bio-waste management in the European Union. This Communication includes an analysis of the bio-waste management options in the EU and outlines further actions in this area. Increased composting and anaerobic digestion were identified as two options where potential benefits appear to be significant. One of the areas to be considered is the added value added of setting bio-waste recycling/separate collection targets. One issue for consideration is the use of biomass from food waste as a feedstock for producing chemicals and fuels.

Deadline : 31 January 2011

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/bio_waste_en.htm

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

2011 - International Year of Chemistry www.chemistry2011.org

January

18th January, International Year of Chemistry Women Sharing a Chemical Moment

27th-28th January, Official Launch of IYC, UNESCO/IUPAC, Paris

28th January, deadline public consultation, European Innovation Partnership pilot on 'Active and Healthy Ageing'

31st January, deadline public consultation, targets for bio-waste recycling

February

1st or 2nd February, Communication and consultation launch for FP8 expected

4th February – First Innovation and Research Council

4th February – Deadline, consultation on the future of consultation on the successor to the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme 2007-2013 (CIP)

10th February, High Level Group on Competitiveness of the Chemicals Industry

10th February, President EuCheMS, launches the IYC in Brussels and banner for IYC on Berlaymont building

24th – 25th February, FP7 Interim Evaluation Workshop, Budapest, (tbc)

March

7th – 8th March, Women in Science Conference, Budapest, (tbc)

10th – 11th March, Council Competitiveness, (tbc) : Europe 2020 strategy – Annual Growth Survey, exchange of views; discussion on Innovation Policy: Flagship Initiative implementing the orientations from the February European Council on innovation; extension Euratom; interim evaluation FP7; policy discussion FP8; Knowledge-based bio-economy

18th – 19th March, Brain Research Conference, Budapest, (tbc)

April

11th – 13th April, Informal Council Competitiveness, (tbc), Budapest-Gödöllő : the 8th Framework Programme for Research and Developments; and, Strategic Research Agenda of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT)

May

19th – 20th May, ICT Proposer's Day, (tbc)

30th May – 1st June, EuroNanoForum, Budapest, (tbc)

30th – 31st May, Council Competitiveness, (tbc) : Interim evaluation of the European Research Council (ERC), Information from the Commission; (poss) Mid-term review of ambient assisted living joint program (AAL), Information from the Commission; Mid-term review of EUROSTARS program, Information from the Commission; Strategic Agenda of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT), information by the Presidency

June

20th – 22nd June, ERC Meeting, Hungarian Presidency event, Budapest (tbc)



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