



European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences
Europäische Vereinigung für Chemische und Molekulare Wissenschaften
Association Européenne pour les Sciences Chimiques et Moléculaires
Европейская Ассоциация Химических и Молекулярных Наук

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EuCheMS and ERC

EuCheMS held a lunch meeting, sponsored by Angelika Niebler MEP, at the European Parliament in Brussels on 13 July at which it welcomed the formation of the European Research Council (ERC). Giovanni Natile, EuCheMS President, led the discussion which included representatives from several EuCheMS member societies.

A meeting note will be available soon.

EuCheMS position statement <http://www.euchems.org/News/index.asp>

EuCheMS press release http://www.euchems.org/binaries/EuCheMSandERC_tcm23-61997.pdf

Mixed reviews for 'evolved' EIT proposal

Changes to the proposed European Institute of Technology (EIT) have led EURAB to offer qualified support for the Commission's evolving plans, while Euroscience continues to believe the EIT proposal raises more questions than it answers.

Euroscience criticizes the suggestion that the EIT should have any preferential relationship with the ERC and re-emphasises that the ERC itself should be the priority for funding. EURAB also restates the importance of the ERC whilst also noting the importance of other important

measures such as increasing finance for research and innovation, and reforming the intellectual property rights system.

EURAB calls for the EIT to be regarded as an 'instrument' rather than an 'institution', and believes that the Commission should look to the experience gained from activities carried out under Article 169 and the European Technology Platforms as a guide EIT. Those involved should also look at successful 'mini-EITs' that already exist says EURAB, and Euroscience refers to the Dutch Leading Technology Institutes or Inter University Micro Elecectronics Center (IMEC) in Belgium, which, it says are proven examples of public and private partners managing and organising their resources and activities effectively.

EURAB welcomes the 'light' structure proposed by the Commission, comprising an autonomous Governing Board with limited membership and calls for a Governing Board with at least 50 per cent industrialists, and accountable to the EU and Member States.

For EURAB, Knowledge Communities (KCs) are at the core of the EIB concept. The KCs would bring together universities, research organisations, industry and regional authorities. To be selected as a KC, a region must have a proven track record, or should be able to demonstrate potential, particularly in terms of generating high-tech and sustainable small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). But while welcoming the adoption in the latest proposal of a combined top-down and bottom-up approach to the selection process of KCs, Euroscience raises doubts as to whether KCs could be realistically operational. 'Why would geographically widely dispersed (...) Knowledge Communities, governed at a distance by some Board of Governors, be an effective and efficient way of developing technologies and innovations?'

One of the most contentious proposals from the Commission has been that the EIT would award degrees. Despite criticism, this proposal has not been dropped. EURAB recommends that degrees be awarded by partner institutions.

EURAB

http://ec.europa.eu/research/eurab/index_en.html

Euroscience

<http://www.euroscience.org>

European Commission

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eit/index_en.html

Cordis

[EURAB welcomes 'evolved' EIT proposal](#)

[EIT revised proposal: more focused but still lacks clarity, says EUROSCIENCE](#)

CORDIS – Presidency Information Service

CORDIS, the Community Research and Development Information Service, has launched a new online service covering the research and innovation activities carried out under the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union (1 July to 31 December 2006). Highlighting the latest news and most relevant developments in the research and development (R&D) policy sphere during this period, the Finnish Presidency Service is part of the gateway to national and regional activities on CORDIS.

The service is available at: http://cordis.europa.eu/finland/presidency/home_en.html

REACH in force by April 2006

Ministers have agreed a common position on the REACH proposals and Parliament's second reading should be concluded with a vote in the December plenary. Barring a lengthy conciliation process REACH could come into force as early as April next year.

Full text of the regulation:

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/06/st07/st07525.en06.pdf>

Source:

www.ReachReady.co.uk

European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures

FP7 will strengthen support for pan-European research infrastructures according to Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik, especially by building on the work of the European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) to produce a roadmap for research infrastructures.

Speaking in Mainz on 7 July, Mr Potocnik acknowledged the importance of supporting the development of integrated research infrastructures of pan European interest and facilitating and financing cross border access to these.

FP6 already has a budget for 'Transnational Access' which funds access to major research infrastructures actions for research teams. This will continue under FP7. FP6 also introduced 'Integrated Infrastructure Initiatives' with funding for Research Infrastructures (RIs) to network activities (including consortium management); provide access to transnational users; and undertake joint research activities.

ESFRI has been working since 2002 to support a coherent approach to policy-making on research infrastructures in Europe, and to act as an incubator for international negotiations on concrete initiatives. Now, working with the Commission it is set to produce the first roadmap for new infrastructures. To be launched in the autumn, the roadmap will identify new infrastructures of pan-European interest (or major upgrades) corresponding to needs of the European research communities, covering all scientific areas, regardless of possible location.

'[It] will therefore be a useful tool for every policy maker in Europe in offering numerous options for research investment... The Commission intends to use the ESFRI list of projects for focusing its support activities for new construction projects under FP7' said the Commissioner.

Mr Potocnik also noted that in FP7, the Commission will expand its support to international consortia, which will eventually result in facilities built on a joint basis, with the EU possibly supporting some of the construction costs, as well facilitating loans through the new Risk Sharing Finance Facility.

ESFRI

<http://cordis.europa.eu/esfri/home.html>

Cordis

[FP7 to strengthen support for pan-European research infrastructures](#)

Stem cell compromise allows approval of FP7 by Ministers

EU ministers managed to clear the latest hurdle on the way to starting FP7 in January 2007 by agreeing a compromise on funding for stem cell research. The Parliament will now hold its second reading of the FP7 proposals in the autumn, where ethical issues are certain to remain the biggest controversy.

Agreement was possible thanks to a compromise text drafted by Mr Potocnik. The two sentences make it clear that activities leading to the destruction of human embryos will not receive funding, while leaving open the possibility of restricted research involving embryonic stem cells. The text reads:

'The European Commission will continue with the current practice and will not submit to the Regulatory Committee proposals for projects which include research activities intended to destroy human embryos, including for the procurement of stem cells. The exclusion of funding of this step of research will not prevent Community funding of subsequent steps involving human embryonic stem cells.'

Each project proposal will also be subject to a strict ethical review, and the rules of each country involved in a project will always be respected.

However, despite praise from industry leaders and many member state governments, five member states registered their opposition to the compromise, while the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano termed the agreement 'The macabre product of a twisted sense of progress.' Given the closeness of the July vote in Parliament and the Christian Democrats (Parliament's largest group) desire to revisit the issue will certainly mean another intense debate and contentious vote in the Autumn could still hold up progress.

Cordis:

[EU stem cell deal receives mixed response](#)

[Stem cell compromise allows approval of FP7 by Council](#)

EURAB criticizes EU international research policy

The EU needs to do more to raise spending on research, development and innovation and mainstream international cooperation in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) according to a report from the European Research Advisory Board (EURAB) on the EU's international research cooperation policies.

EURAB sets out recommendations which it believes could ensure the EU's role as a world leader in research and development.

- Make all parts of FP7 more open to non-European partners with international cooperation having a specific budget line in each theme.
- Improve the attractiveness of the EU to the best researchers in the world by lowering the barriers to cross-border mobility, and investing more in scientific infrastructures, including global, large-scale facilities.
- Define European added value to include 'win-win' situations in international scientific and technological cooperation, simplifying application procedures and providing more information to help researchers outside the EU participate in the framework programme.

- Develop large, visible projects addressing shared problems and ensure the programme takes account of the different interests of developing, emerging and industrialised countries.

However, the authors note that to compete effectively at the international level, the EU urgently needs to up its research spending.

Sources:

EURAB:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/eurab/index_en.html

Cordis:

[EU needs new, proactive international research policy, says EURAB](#)

German research funding to rise

Germany's research budget is set to increase again in 2007, as the government prepares to announce a new innovation policy and hi-tech strategy.

The government agreed the budget for 2007 on 5 July. The Ministry for Education and Research will have €8.5 billion to spend, an increase of 6.2 per cent from 2006.

Sources:

Federal Ministry for Education and Research, Germany

<http://www.bmbf.de>

Cordis

[More money for German research, as government discusses hi-tech strategy](#)

Towards a European digital library

The 10th European conference on research and advanced technology for digital libraries will take place from 17 to 22 September in Alicante, Spain.

The special topic of this year's conference is 'Towards a European digital library', which aims to emphasise the contribution of the European research community to efforts by the European Commission to develop a common digital library.

<http://www.ecdl2006.org/>

Cordis

[Towards a European digital library](#)

Testing biotechnology opinion

[Date: 2006-08-04]

Four years ago, the European Commission launched its 'Life sciences and biotechnology - a strategy for Europe' action plan. Now, at the half-way point of the eight-year strategy, the initiative is up for review.

To comment on the biotechnology proposals, published in 2002, submissions must arrive by 30 September 2006. Comment is open to all. Meanwhile, Eurobarometer has published the second part of its survey into attitudes to biotechnology.

Overall, opinion is increasingly positive towards biotechnology, with EU citizens feeling better informed, and trusting the biotechnology industry more. Biotechnology is broadly supported in medical and industrial sectors, but not in agricultural sectors, showing continuing concern over GMOs.

Sources:

Life sciences and biotechnology - A strategy for Europe:

http://ec.europa.eu/biotechnology/pdf/com2002-27_en.pdf

Eurobarometer survey into European attitudes to biotechnology:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/biosociety/pdf/eb_64_3_final_report_second_edition_july_06.pdf

Mid-term consultation:

http://ec.europa.eu/biotechnology/docs/public-consultation-document_en.rtf

Philosophy of risk in practical risk assessment, Stockholm

CASCADE (Chemicals as Contaminants in the food chain a network of excellence for research, risk assessment and education) has organised a course on the 'Philosophy of risk in practical risk assessment', to take place in Stockholm between 9 and 13 October 2006.

For further information, please visit:

<http://www.cascadenet.org>

FP7 training sessions, France

Interface Europe has organised a training course on the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), to take place in Paris, France, on 14 September.

For further information, and to register:

<http://www.interfaceeurope.net/news.php?p=news&lang=fr>

Workshop: explaining the Seventh Framework Programme

On 12 September, Singleimage will hold a workshop on the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) in Cambridge, UK.

First Calls for proposals under the EU's FP7 are expected at the end of 2006. Technical scope, participation rules and administrative procedures are all currently under discussion and negotiation between the Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Member States.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.singleimage.co.uk/>