



European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences
Europäische Vereinigung für Chemische und Molekulare Wissenschaften
Association Européenne pour les Sciences Chimiques et Moléculaires
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Final Approval for FP7

The Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7) received final approval 5 December 2006. The programme, which starts January 2007, will see an immediate 40% boost in annual EU research spending, and a new emphasis on excellence in fundamental research with the launch of the European Research Council (ERC).

Whilst the Commission's original proposal was cut by a third, the FP7 budget still represents a 40% yearly increase in real terms (75% in 2013) compared with funding for 2006. Chemistry is well represented in the programme with opportunities in almost all of the nine thematic priorities. These have been developed with input from scientific organisations including technology platforms such as SusChem, the European Technology Platform for Sustainable Chemistry on sustainable chemistry, in which EuCheMS members such as the German Chemical Society (GDCh) and the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) are major partners.

Advances in chemistry will be central to progress in energy research, one of the big priority areas for new funding. This will cover energy efficiency (half of the budget of €2.35bn), renewables and clean coal and carbon-capture related research. The environment research thematic programme including climate change, in which chemists are set to play a major role, will receive €1.9bn for seven years. In addition to this, the Commission says that the issue will also be addressed horizontally across many other priorities, such as transport.

The creation of the European Research Council is particularly welcome and EuCheMS expressed its support for this initiative in a high-level roundtable discussion in the European Parliament in July 2006. The ERC will stimulate investigator-initiated frontier research across all fields, on the basis of excellence.

Two types of grant will be available from the ERC, the Advanced Investigator Grant (AIG) and the Starting Independent Researcher Grant (SIRG). The first call for proposals, for the SIRG, is expected to be launched before the end of the month. It will be open to excellent researchers of any nationality who are in the EU or an associated country, or moving to the region, who are establishing and leading their first research team or programme. The budget for the first call will be around €300 million with increases planned in subsequent years.

A regulation setting out the rules for participation in FP7 by companies, research institutes and universities, and on the dissemination of research results was also adopted.

Note:

A full EuCheMS briefing on FP7 is available at www.euchems.org/News/index.asp including extensive links to detailed resources.

FP7 Calls for Proposals Launched

The Commission published a batch of calls for proposals under FP7, the new research programme, on 22 December 2006 and a further batch is expected at the end of January. The calls cover actions across all themes with deadlines during April and May 2007.

News and information on all calls for proposals is available on the Cordis FP7 site http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

Council Pushes for Prompt Action on EIT

Europe's Heads of State and Government called for the swift adoption of the Commission's proposals for the establishment of a European Institute of Technology (EIT) when they met in Brussels on 14 and 15 December.

The European Council also invited the Commission to

- rapidly make proposals for the setting up of *Joint Technology Initiatives* (JTIs), with the most advanced ones to be launched in 2007
- present a comprehensive *IPR strategy*, addressing issues such as the quality of the current IPR system.
- to propose action for the improvement of the working methods and overall resources of European *standardisation* bodies.

Summit Conclusions:

http://www.eu2006.fi/news_and_documents/conclusions/vko50/en_GB/1166190412454/

Parliament Votes for Clear Targets for Future EU Energy Policy

In advance of the Commission's energy package (published 10 January 2007) the European Parliament voted for challenging energy policy targets in its report on the Commission's Green Paper on a European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy on 14 December 2006.

The Parliament's resolution foresees specific targets:

- 30% CO₂ reduction by 2020 and 60-80% by 2050;

- 25% of primary energy production from renewables by 2020 and a road map to reach 50% by 2040;
- energy efficiency improvements of 20% by 2020.

Parliament also recognises the role that nuclear energy can play in the energy mix of some member states, but leaves it up to the individual countries to decide on the future of nuclear power. A proposal to generate 60% of Europe's electricity from "non-carbon emitting technologies" was defeated.

Parliament: A cleaner, greener future for EU energy policy?

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/051-1386-345-12-50-909-20061208IPR01269-11-12-2006-2006-false/default_en.htm

Eur-Lex: Green Paper - A European Strategy for Sustainable, Competitive and Secure Energy
http://ec.europa.eu/energy/green-paper-energy/doc/2006_03_08_gp_document_en.pdf

REACH Chemicals Law Adopted

A compromise deal on the proposed REACH regulation was adopted by Parliament on 13 December with 529 votes in favour, 98 against and 24 abstentions and made law following the final approval of the EU Council of Ministers on 18 December 2006. The new law reverses the burden of proof for the safety of chemical substances from authorities to businesses.

An agreement on the replacement of the most toxic substances with safer alternatives was a key part of the compromise. If a "safer alternative" exists at reasonable cost, dangerous substances will have to be replaced. If not, companies will need to produce either a substitution plan or an R&D plan to replace them at a later stage. Cefic criticised this clause and warned that the end result would be "legal uncertainty" for business and, consequently, reduced investments and innovation.

The new rules will come into effect from June 2007 and around 30,000 substances over an 11-year period with a new chemicals agency to be set up in Helsinki. The registration process will begin with the most toxic chemicals as well as those marketed in higher volumes.

The REACH regulation comes into force in June 2007 and the European Chemicals Agency becomes operational in June 2008. At this point the pre-registration phase will start. The registration phase closes in June 2018 with substances produced in smaller quantities (1-10 tonnes).

Commission (Press release):

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/1799&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Commission: Q&A on REACH

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/06/488&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

German EU Presidency

From 1 January to 1 July 2007, Germany will organise and chair the Council meetings. The motto of the presidency is "Together Europe can succeed". Along with the EU Presidency, Germany will also chair the G8 from 1 January 2007.

A key issue for the presidency is energy and the environment. The Commission will publish an important energy package, including an "energy action plan" on 10 January 2007, which will be discussed at the European Council in March. This will especially look at the issues of

energy efficiency, bio energy and innovation, but also the more difficult issues of energy solidarity, the national energy mix and national energy champions.

Other major concerns include the Lisbon Agenda, the constitution and enlargement (Turkey and the Western Balkans)

Key dates:

1 January 2007: Germany takes over the EU presidency.

17 January 2007: Presentation of the Presidency Programme

8-9 March 2007: European Council ("Spring Summit") will adopt the "Energy Action Plan"

24-25 March 2007: 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome: "Berlin Declaration" will redefine the broad goals and values of the EU.

6-8 June: G8 Summit.

21-22 June 2007: European Council: the German Presidency will present a document that takes stock of the current constitutional crisis and proposes options for the way forward.

Another issue addressed will be the Lisbon re-launch.

EU Presidency Programme:

http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2006/11/2006-11-30-europa-gelingt-gemeinsam_en.html

Council Work Programme:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/fr/fc/92264.pdf

Research Priorities for German EU Presidency

Germany has said it plans to use its Presidency of the EU to extend European cooperation in the fields of education and research.

Although FP7 has been approved, there are a few outstanding details including the European funding of joint research programmes set up by groups of Member States (the Article 169 Measures) and the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs). The Presidency also hopes to provide specific examples of how EU structural funds can be used alongside FP7 funding and launch an initiative for a charter on dealing with intellectual property at public research institutes and universities.

On education, the German Presidency will place a high priority on increasing the mobility of young people. Particular importance will be placed on working on the European Qualifications Framework and the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training.

Presidency – Education and Training Priorities: <http://www.bmbf.de/en/7168.php>

Cordis:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=9&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1168436138581&RCN=26825

Biotech Industry Sets Out New Policy Agenda

The European biotechnology industry has published a new Industrial Biotechnology Policy Agenda for Europe. The document sets out a range of concrete proposals which could see the industrial biotech sector form the basis of a future EU knowledge-based bio-economy (KBBE).

The report was produced by EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, and endorsed by ESAB, the European Federation of Biotechnology section on Applied Biocatalysis.

Europe has a strong academic base in the biological sciences, and includes some of the world's leading enzyme companies and the world's largest chemical industry. However, the report notes that more needs to be done if the industry is to achieve its potential.

According to the report, there is a great need to harmonise the various policy areas which involve biotechnology, through the appointment of a Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy (KBBE) Coordinator by the European, and the creation of a KBBE Task Force to coordinate work in different EU Member States.

The report's authors also ask for more support for innovation through the Strategic Research Agendas from the KBBE related Technology Platforms (particularly Sustainable Chemistry, Plants for the Future, Forestry and Biofuels).

According to the report, much of the innovation in this growing sector is likely to come from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and two areas where they need particular help are in the field of intellectual property protection and financing.

EuropaBio: <http://www.europabio.org/>

Cordis:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=8&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1168462576263&RCN=26834

Reassurance on JTIs

Research Commissioner, Janez Potocnik has reassured industry that the selection of JTIs is not pre-judged. The roadmap for JTIs produced for the Lahti Summit in October 2006 has caused unrest among some potential JTI partnerships because it highlighted certain sectors.

The roadmap indicated that, at this stage, two JTIs seem most advanced in preparations: that on innovative medicines and that on embedded computing systems. 'This indication is based on purely technical considerations at a given point of time. But this does not prejudice future developments,' the Commissioner explained. 'You can count on the fact that as soon as a convincing proposal is ready I will submit it to the Council. Not sooner, not later,' said Mr Potocnik.

JTIs are expected to be launched for several other sectors including aeronautics, hydrogen and fuel cells, nano-electronics and monitoring the environment and security.

Cordis:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=11&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1168437002353&RCN=26774

China's R&D Spending 'Stunning'

By the end of 2006, China is set to overtake Japan and become world's number-two R&D investor after the United States.

According to an OECD report in December 2006, China has not only more than doubled its R&D spending since 1995 (R&D as a percentage of GDP), passing from 0.6 to 1.3% of GDP, but the number of researchers was also increased by 77% between 1995 and 2004, mainly because researchers' increased salaries encourage talented Chinese scientists and engineers to remain in China.

Currently, the Chinese economy is growing by some 10% a year and the R&D intensity is increasing even faster. China has therefore now become the second largest R&D investor behind the United States. "The rapid rise of China in both money spent and researchers employed is stunning," said Dirk Pilat, head of the OECD's Science and Technology Policy division, urging other OECD countries to make their R&D systems more efficient to keep up.

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/oecd-china-rd-spending-stunning/article-160253>

Note:

EuCheMS Brussels News aims to provide a digest of EU issues likely to be of interest to our members and covers the period to the end of the preceding month. Further details on each issue are provided through links to established sources.

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