



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

# Brussels News Update July 2006

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## Introduction

This is EuCheMS first monthly Brussels news bulletin prepared by our Brussels-based European Policy Consultant, Glenn Vaughan. 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.

## Key steps towards FP7

The European Parliament has completed its first reading of the proposed Framework Programme for Research (FP7), approving the report by Jerzy Buzek MEP of the Industry Research and Energy (ITRE) Committee. This endorses the Commission's proposed structure of FP7. The key issues of contention included stem cell research, priorities for energy research, the European Research Council and the FP7 budget.

The European Commission has responded quickly with a revised proposal to be presented to ministers at the Informal Competitiveness Council on 10-11 July. There are no major changes, but rather, a number of clarifications and additions. The Commission claims its new proposals "take up in spirit and content, if not necessarily always with the exact wording... the position taken by the other institutions".

## Budget

There was cross-party agreement that the agreed budget of EUR 50.521 billion for FP7 was too low but little appetite for a further clash with the Council of Ministers on this. This budget remains a step change in funding from the EUR 16bn allocated to FP6.

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## Thematic Areas

Despite a vote by MEPs to divide the space and security theme into two, the Commission's new proposal keeps funding to themes under the Cooperation programme the same, with some further detail on which areas will be funded. MEPs highlighted health and energy as their two biggest priorities under the thematic research areas and these are reflected to some extent in the Commission proposal, with further detail on funding ranging from healthy ageing and infectious diseases to soil fertility, the sustainability of fisheries, platforms for software and services and nano-composites.

## ERC

There was strong support from MEPs for the creation of the ERC but concern that it should enjoy "real autonomy". MEPs proposed that it should be initially created as an Executive Agency, becoming an independent organisation within a short period.

While not directly taking up this suggestion, the Commission's document (see link below) sets out further clarification on the term of office, the renewal and the role of the Scientific Council, the management and staffing arrangements, and the independent review of the ERC. However, while MEPs had pressed for an early review of the ERC, by 2008, the Commission says this is too early and instead proposes a review by 2010 at the latest.

## Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs)

Following proposals from the Buzek report, the Commission has made changes to the criteria for, organisation and implementation of JTIs. New criteria include the existence of a genuine societal need and benefit; the scale of the impact on industrial competitiveness and growth; and the inability of existing instruments to achieve the objective. The importance of engaging SMEs is also highlighted.

## Energy

A number of groups had lobbied for more money for renewable energy technologies and against the use of FP7 money to supplement the remnants of the European Coal & Steel Community research fund for coal. MEPs voted to support calls for a minimum of two-thirds of energy research funding to be dedicated to renewables.

## Stem Cell Research

Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik supported the position agreed by the ITRE Committee in May. This states that while embryos should not be produced solely for stem cell research, FP7 money could be used to fund stem cell research in countries where the legal system permitted it, and in the framework of strict licensing conditions.

## Others issues

Other issues highlighted by MEPs during the debate included science and society, including educating the public on analysing and managing risk, scientific links to industry, improving employment and jobs, and disease prevention.

## Next Steps

- The Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik will present the state of play on FP7 to ministers in the informal competitiveness council on 10-11 July 2006. Council aims to reach a political agreement on 25 September 2006
- EuCheMS VIP Lunch and Roundtable discussion in European Parliament, Brussels, 13 July 2006 (see below)

- Parliament second reading commences September. First calls for proposals for FP7 projects could be published in December 2006, for submission in March 2007, with projects beginning late 2007.

Sources:

Cordis, European Parliament, European Commission, Euractiv.com

Cordis:

[European Parliament adopts report on FP7](#)

[Commission incorporates Parliament views in revised FP7 proposal](#)

[Amended Commission Proposal 28.06.06](#)

[Austrian Council Presidency](#)

PreLex - Monitoring the decision-making process:

[Seventh Framework Programme for Research](#)

European Parliament:

[Buzek Report on FP7](#)

[Press Release 13.06.06](#)

[EPP-ED Buzek Press Release 13.06.06](#)

## EuCheMs at the European Parliament

EuCheMS will launch its activities in Brussels with a VIP lunch and roundtable discussion in the European Parliament in Brussels 13 July 2006. Senior representatives from EuCheMS member societies will discuss the strategy and operation of the ERC with members of the Parliament's Industry Research and Energy (ITRE) Committee including Jerzy Buzek MEP, Commissioner Potočník's spokesperson, and representatives from CERC3, COST Chemistry and the European Science Foundation (ESF).

- EuCheMS supports the formation of the European Research Council (ERC) and is keen to consult with, and co-operate closely with, the ERC.
- EuCheMS believes that as the ERC develops its policies and strategies it should not aim to replace the programmes of nation-state research councils but rather it should complement these at the European level. In this manner the ERC will build its own distinctive character as well as add strength overall to the European science scene.
- EuCheMS reminds the ERC of the strong emphasis that the European Parliament and Framework Programme 7 has placed on fundamental research within the chemical sciences as a crucial underpinning core competency and it expects this to be reflected through tangible funding support.
- Although the ERC should take full cognisance of the applied research and development imperatives that are being set within the FP7 European Technology Platform (ETP) agenda, it should not simply mimic these priorities but rather look to support first-class ideas and research work that both inform and indeed challenge those currently accepted norms and assumptions.
- EuCheMS supports therefore the principle that in assessing what research activity it should support, the ERC should use scientific quality as the sole criterion for support (viz,

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excellence of research work from internationally recognised researchers coupled with the imaginative testing of bright new ideas)

- EuCheMS recommends that the ERC should place a high priority on effectively supporting promising young investigators who will be needed to provide the forward thinking research base of the future within Europe and welcomes the Starting Independent Research Grants (SIRGs).

ERC:

[Launch Strategy](#)

EuCheMS:

EuCheMS statement on the European Research Council, June 2006 [www.euchems.org](http://www.euchems.org)  
EuCheMS Newsletter

### ERC invites nominations for experts

The Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC) has invited nominations for members and chairs of the 18 panels, which will assess its first call for proposals for Starting Independent Researcher Grants.

The **deadline** for submission of nominations is **10 July 2006**.

[Full details from ERC](#)

### Council welcomes progress on Lisbon Strategy

EU Heads of State and Government welcomed the 'extensive' measures undertaken by Member States and the European Commission to invest in knowledge, innovation and business potential, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as part of the re-launched Lisbon Strategy.

Meeting in Brussels on 16 June, the European Council noted in particular progress on the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), European Institute for Technology (EIT), FP7, and the modernisation of European universities.

The CIP is a new EU programme to help enterprises and industry to innovate. Between 2007 and 2013, under CIP, some 350,000 SMEs will receive EUR 3.6 billion in EU support to invest in all forms of innovation and growth.

EU leaders also referred to the important role the proposed European Institute for Technology (EIT) could play in filling 'the existing gap between higher education, research and innovation', together with other actions that enhance networking and synergies between excellent research and innovation communities in Europe. The Commission will present its formal proposal for its establishment in Autumn 2006, following consultation with the European Research Council, Member States and stakeholders.

The Council supported the rapid adoption of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Specifically, the Council emphasised the added value of joining forces in combating rare diseases and welcomed research activities under FP7 to develop preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic interventions.

The meeting discussed the Commission's recent Communication on universities, in which Member States were urged to press on with the modernisation of Europe's universities. The Council reiterated the need for Member States to promote excellence and foster modernisation, restructuring and innovation to underpin Europe's drive for more growth and jobs.

[Council Conclusions](#)  
[Cordis News](#)

## Finnish Presidency of the EU

Priorities for the Finnish Presidency (starting 1 July) include the EU's financial perspective for 2007-2013. There are almost 40 policy programmes, including FP7, for which negotiations need to be concluded.

Promoting the development of a broad-based innovation policy will be a priority for the Presidency. A report on the new ideas and challenges in innovation policy is planned and, on the basis of the report, recommendations are to be made for the future of innovation policy by the end of 2006.

[Finnish EU Presidency Priorities](#)

## Importance of robust science for policy-making

Dr Roland Schenkel, Director-General, Directorate-General Joint Research Centre (DG JRC) emphasised importance of 'robust science for policy-making' throughout the entire EU policy cycle in his the new positioning statement for the JRC.

Created fifty years ago, the JRC provides other DGs and European institutions such as the Council or Parliament with the research they need for policy-making in areas such as: food safety, chemical products and health; environment and sustainability; nuclear safety and security; technology foresight; reference materials and measurements; public security and antifraud.

Dr Schenkel outlined independence as a key factor for advice to policy-makers. "First of all, scientific expertise is playing an increasing role in the legislative process worldwide. Policy-makers want to know the facts and to receive independent advice."

The JRC's personnel includes 35 per cent "mobile staff" such as grant holders and visiting scientists - which is considered extremely important for competence building and competitiveness. DG JRC needs this spread and inflow of new ideas as well as the personal exchange of established experts with young people.

[DG JRC](#)  
[Cordis News](#)

## Major public event to launch FP7

The European Commission will launch the Seventh Framework Programme at a major research event in Brussels on 7 March 2007. The event will aim to increasing public awareness of European research and raise the level of political commitment to research.

High level representatives of the European Commission and the German Presidency of the EU will launch the event with an 'Evening on European research' at which the Descartes Prizes for collaborative research and science communication will be awarded.

A major exhibition will promote European research successes to the public and practical classrooms will give children an exciting introduction to science. The exhibition aims to showcase European research successes and show how they contribute to the solution of EU citizens' concerns and questions

Details:

- About 50 exhibitors will be selected (by the end of September 2006)
- About 200,000 visitors are expected
- The exhibition will be open from 8 to 18 March 2007
- Exhibitors are expected to bring along their equipment and stands
- Selected exhibitors will be offered an area free of charge. The exact surface will depend on their needs
- The total exhibition area is close to 25,000 m<sup>2</sup>

More information is available on:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/events/>

### Europeans more optimistic about biotechnology

The latest Eurobarometer survey reveals that Europeans are becoming more optimistic about biotechnology after consistently falling support throughout the 1990s. A clear majority supported embryonic stem cell research and 52 per cent of those polled saying they believed biotechnology would improve their quality of life. However, opinion is still strongly against GM foods.

Public attitudes were a key part of the debate on FP7, which took place in the European Parliament during June. The survey also indicates that when it comes to science policy issues, Europeans are not so interested in finding out about the scientific details, but want to be informed about the possible impacts of the technology on society. It is also clear that there is a strong desire for moral and ethical criteria to be considered alongside scientific evidence.

[Survey report](#)

### Commission consultation on welfare of laboratory animals

The European Commission has launched an online consultation on how to increase the welfare of animals used in experiments. The results of the survey will be used to shape the Commission's forthcoming proposal to revise the existing EU legislation. The consultation consists of two questionnaires - one aimed at the general public, the other at experts.

The second questionnaire is aimed at experts in animal welfare, animal testing, animal science, natural science and legal and economic affairs related to these areas. It invites comments on the preliminary findings of an impact assessment on the options for the revision of the current legislation.

[Commission consultation and questionnaires](#)

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### FP7 workshop. Rome, Italy

An introductory training course on the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) will take place on 4 July in Rome, Italy. The course is aimed at preparing those interested in participating in an FP7 project. It will provide an overview of the structure, content and instruments of the research programme, as well strategies for successful participation.

More information:

<http://www.apre.it/serviziapre/forma/corsi.asp>

### Brussels Workshop: Getting Ready for Framework 7

On 11 July, EARTO (European Association of Research and Technology Organisations) and Hyperion will organise a half-day workshop entitled 'Getting Ready for Framework 7' in Brussels, Belgium. The aim of this course is to train research managers and EU advisors how to prepare for the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7).

More information:

<http://www.hyperion.ie/course1529.htm>

For more events:

[Cordis News](#)