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Commission work programme 2011

The Commission have published the Commission Work Programme for 2011. The CWP gives a multiannual overview which aims to help stakeholders and other EU institutions plan their work with the Commission. Some initiatives may be carried over from the previous year. The Commission outlines strategic initiatives due to be adopted in 2011 and provides an indicative list of other important initiatives for 2011-14. The programme makes no reference to the Communication and subsequent draft Research Framework Programme which the Commission plans for next year, nor does it mention the review of the Research and

Development state aid rules, a review of which is also anticipated for 2011. These are surprising omissions. Research specific initiatives identified include : a strategy on the bio-based economy by 2020; a Communication on how partnerships for innovation and research can deliver innovation, with a particular emphasis on the Innovation Partnerships concept; and, a Communication on access to scientific information, including the possibility of open access for the whole of the next FP8 programme.

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm

ERC - Reviews Governance Structures for FP8

In response to a request from the Competitiveness Council, on 2nd March 2010, the ERC have set up a task force, chaired by the Director General for Research, Robert-Jan Smits, "to carry out by July 2011 an independent evaluation as a follow-up to the Review recommendations. The evaluation should, inter alia, deal with the question as to whether the ERC's structure is sufficiently tailored to achieve its mission or whether an alternative structure is called for, and, if necessary, make recommendations on this point that could be implemented by the start of the Eighth Framework Programme". Importance will also be placed on the possibility of positioning the ERC within the European Research Area, taking full account of the new institutional framework defined by the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty.

The ERC have decided not to implement the 2009 review recommendation to merge the two co-existing positions of ERC Secretary General and ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA) Director until the Task Force delivers its results. The ERC have recently interviewed and will appoint a new Secretary General in the near future.

Source: http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/looking_ahead.pdf

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn promotes Innovation Union

Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, addressed Business Europe and the European Parliaments Research and Industry Committee on the new Innovation Union Flagship, see October's Brussels News Update. The Commissioner described the European Innovation Partnerships as the centrepiece of the Innovation Union document. The Commissioner announced that the Commission are planning to launch a limited number of European Innovation Partnerships in areas where a clear and verifiable goal can be set, one issue high on the list will be the sustainable supply of non-energy raw materials, something which the Commissioner describes as, 'absolutely crucial for the future of European industry'. A key selection criterion is that there should be a significant market potential for EU industry. The objective will be to bring all key actors together and couple funding or supply-side measures with those on the demand side covering procurement, standards and regulations.

The Partnerships will weave together the relevant instruments already in place, such as Joint Technology Initiatives, Joint Programming Initiatives, the Lead Market Initiative, public-private partnership under the Recovery Plan, and the themes of the current and future Framework Programmes for Research.

In the European Parliament, the Commissioner said that a number of key questions remain, on how FP8 will need to be structured, what its priorities should be and which instruments it should use to serve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, and in particular the Innovation Union, in the best possible way. A Communication expected in February will set out the key questions on the future research programme.

Sources: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases1> <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases2>

New Energy Strategy towards 2020

EU energy goals are a central part of Europe's 2020 strategy. The EU has committed itself to meeting a target of 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, a 20% increase in the share of renewable energy and a 20 % improvement in energy efficiency. The Commission recently presented its new Communication "Energy 2020" which defines the energy priorities for the next ten years and sets the actions to be taken in order to tackle the challenges of saving energy, achieving a market with competitive prices and secure supplies, boosting technological leadership, and effectively negotiating with international partners.

The Commission identified as top priorities:-

1. Energy savings, focused on transport and buildings;
2. Pan-European integrated energy market with infrastructures, it is estimated that this requires €1 trillion of investment. This also requires extending and deepening the Energy Community Treaty to further integrate countries willing to participate in the EU's energy market;
3. European leadership in energy technology and innovation, such as, new technologies for intelligent networks and electricity storage
4. Promoting affordable energy by strengthening consumers ability to switch suppliers and have clearer billing and comparison between providers.

What next?

Heads of States and Governments at the very first EU Summit on Energy on 4 February 2011. The Commission Work Programme 2011, see above, outlines legislative and non-legislative measures in this field.

Sources: http://ec.europa.eu/energy/strategies/2010/2020_en.htm

Europe 2020 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/2>

R&D Investment Scoreboard

The EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard shows that R&D investment by top EU companies fell by 2.6% in 2009, even though sales and profits fell much more, by 10.1% and 21.0% respectively. The performance across the EU was mixed, Spain led the way by increasing investment by 15.4%. The fall in R&D investment by leading companies in the US, at 5.1%, was twice as sharp as in the EU, but the worldwide reduction was lower, at 1.9%. This ends the positive trend of the past four years, when annual growth rates were well above 5%. Companies based in Asia - China, India, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan - continued the high R&D growth seen in previous years. Three EU companies feature in the top ten: Volkswagen, the biggest investor based in Europe with €5.8bn, Nokia and Sanofi-Aventis. The Scoreboard covers the top 1400 companies worldwide.

Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science said: "The continuing rapid rise of Asian-based companies highlight the innovation emergency Europe is facing. We urgently need heads of state and government at the December European Council to back the Innovation Union proposals that Antonio Tajani and I announced on 6 October."

Source: <http://iri.jrc.ec.europa.eu/reports.htm>

Evaluation of Joint Technology Initiatives

The Commission have carried out their first evaluations of Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI). Five JTIs were established in order to implement the strategic research agendas identified by European Technology Platforms, under the Sixth Framework Programme. The two JTIs that have been evaluated are ARTEMIS in the field of embedded computing systems and ENIAC in the field of nanoelectronics. The evaluation report includes a long list of recommendations looking at improvements that could be made by industrial associations, countries, the

Commission and the joint undertakings - the public-private partnerships that are established under the JTIs. Most recommendations are aimed at the next generation of JTIs. Comments by those consulted included the perception that JTIs were just another funding scheme, concern about the level of overlap with Eureka clusters and the very real need for new staff and financial regulations from the Commission. The evaluation report, supports continued use of JTIs, but also looks at different options for the future.

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/information_society

Perception Biotechnology Poll

The analysis of this Eurobarometer is part of the research project Sensitive Technologies and European Public Ethics (STEPE), funded by the Science in Society Programme of FP7. The Europe-wide poll shows public support for responsible innovation in life sciences and biotechnology. The survey reveals important knowledge gaps : a majority of respondents had never heard of some of the areas covered by the survey, such as nanotechnology (55% unaware), biobanks (67% unaware) and synthetic biology (83% unaware).

There was overwhelming support for medical applications of biotechnology, subject to strict laws 63% of respondents approved of embryonic stem cell research, up from 59% in 2005. 69% conditionally supported other stem cell research and 63% supported gene therapy. The countries where most respondents were supportive of these applications overall were the UK, Spain and Denmark. However, the public is not convinced and feel uneasy about genetic modification of food and remain strongly opposed to cloning.

Research, Innovation and Science Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn said: "This survey tells us (...that...) Europeans are mostly rather positive about biotechnology although they remain uneasy about some particular aspects. (...There is) a major communication challenge. (All...) decisions on biotechnology should be rooted in sound science and take due account of ethical, health and environmental factors: we cannot be led either by emotional reactions or by short-term commercial considerations'. *Biotechnology* will continue to be a key research area under the next EU Framework Programme.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases4>

Food - Cloning Suspension

The Commission have prepared a question and answer, memo on cloning. The memo provides an overview of the issue, from the Commission's perspective, in particular, it outlines why the Commission is proposing a temporary suspension of the technique for food production.

Source : <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases5>

FUNDING UPDATE

ERC Announce 'Advanced Grant' Awards

The European Research Council (ERC) has opened its call for Advanced Investigator Grants. Scientific excellence is the sole criterion to assess and select proposals. The excellence of the PI (Principle Investigator) and their track record forms 50% of the evaluation during peer review, the other 50% is for the excellence of the research project. As much as €2.5 million over a five year period can be requested, it may be possible to exceed this if a good justification is given. Being an 'established' researcher means having a recognised and exceptional record over the last ten years. This can include the number of patents granted, number of invitations to presentations in advanced colloquia, well established conferences and schools, prizes and awards received.

The deadlines are 9th February for Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE) Domain (Panels PE1 - PE10) and 10th March for Life Sciences (LS) Domain (Panels LS 1 - LS9). All related documents and Electronic Proposal Submission Service (EPSS) are now available on the Cordis website, see below. Anyone, interested in applying should familiarise themselves with these documents. However, there are two changes of note. A PI who submitted an eligible proposal to the last Advanced Grant call can not apply under the current call, unless the last proposal was evaluated as meeting a quality level of 2 in the first step of the evaluation. There is also a new form that needs to be completed for co-investigators.

Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>

Innovative Medicines Initiative – 3rd call for proposals launched

IMI - The Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) is Europe's largest public-private partnership aiming to improve the drug development process by supporting a more efficient discovery and development of better drugs. The current call includes the following topics: Drug induced liver injury; Immunogenicity of biopharmaceuticals; Immunosafety of vaccines; Tuberculosis; Autism; and, Diabetes.

Deadline: 18th January 2011.

Source: <http://www.imi.europa.eu/content/call-proposals>

Ner300 - €4.5 Billion Carbon Capture and Renewable Energy Demonstration Projects

The Commission have recently published the criteria and measures for the financing of commercial demonstration projects that aim at the environmentally safe capture and geological storage of CO₂ as well as demonstration projects of innovative renewable energy technologies under the scheme for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading within the Community.

NER300 is funded from the sale of 300 million emission allowances held in the New Entrants Reserve (NER) of the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). At the current market price, the 300 million allowances would raise around € 4.5 billion.

The selection of projects to be co-funded will take place through two calls for proposals. The first call, covers the equivalent of 200 million allowances. The second call will cover the equivalent of 100 million allowances together with any unused allowances from the first round. Having two rounds will allow the geographical and technical balance of the projects selected to be adjusted if necessary.

The intention is to co-fund at least eight CCS projects and at least 34 innovative renewable energy technology projects. For CCS, there must also be a minimum of one project, and a maximum of three, in each of the following categories: Pre-combustion; Post combustion; Oxy-fuel; Industrial applications.

Regarding renewable energy projects, the numbers of projects eligible for co-funding in each category are as follows: Bio-energy 9; Concentrated solar power 5; Solar photovoltaic 3; Wind 6; Geothermal 4; Ocean (wave and tidal power, ocean thermal energy conversion) 3; Hydro-electric 1; Distributed renewables management (Smart Grids) 3 ;

NER300 will fund up to 50% of the relevant costs of projects. This funding can be combined with financing from other mechanisms such as the Structural and Cohesion Funds and the European Energy Programme for Recovery (EEPR). Member States can also co-finance projects, but this is not a requirement.

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ2>

LIFE + Environment Programme

The LIFE+ funding scheme is DG Environment's main funding programme dedicated to the environment. The EC has recently published the mid-term review in the form of an EC staff working document. The review contains many statistics about the LIFE+ programme. Around 49 % of the budget of LIFE+ so far has been invested in nature conservation and biodiversity, including forest and soil protection. 19 % has been devoted to improve resource efficiency and environmental quality, and greening the economy. 14 % of the budget has been used to address climate change problems and 8 % has been committed to ensure compliance with environmental legislation and to communication activities.

Over 2007-2009 universities and research institutions represent 22 % of the lead beneficiaries closely followed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) at 19 % and by enterprises and professional organisations (17 %), public authorities were the largest beneficiaries.

Source: <http://www.ipex.eu/ipex/cms/>

EIB - UK Knowledge Economy Loan

The European Investment Bank, the European Union's long-term lending institution, has reached a formal agreement to provide the first tranche of a loan to the 'UK Knowledge Economy' that will provide GBP 150m for Higher and Further Education facilities, science parks and incubation centres. Further funding will be available next year as additional projects are identified and other banks are expected to join the programme, the total EIB funding will be GBP 500m. Overall investment in projects supported by the UK Knowledge Economy is expected to reach more than GBP 2 billion.

This programme is part of the European Investment Bank's broader engagement to support and strengthen the UK's knowledge economy. Eligible projects include campus redevelopments and relocation and construction of specialist science park and start-up company incubator facilities. The investment support programme will be spread over 18 months and build on the specialist education finance experience of the partner banks.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases6>

CONSULTATIONS

Consultation Future of Competitiveness and Innovation Programme

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the successor to the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme 2007-2013 (CIP). CIP is an amalgam of three discrete programmes: the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (EIP), the ICT - Policy Support Programme (ICT-PSP) and the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme. Each programme has its specific objectives, but in general focus on the innovation stage of development, such as, access to finance, innovation (including eco-innovation), take-up and use of information and communication technologies (ICT), energy efficiency and renewables. Through the consultation, the public is invited to have its say on what the priorities of future competitiveness and innovation EU funding should be. The consultation will remain open until 4 February 2011.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases7>

Sulphur in Liquid Fuels

International maritime transport is important for both intra-EU trade and for the import and export of goods. Provisions related to the reduction of sulphur emissions are transposed into EU law by means of the Directive 1999/32/EC related to the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels ("Directive"). IMO, Annex VI of the Marine Pollution Convention 73/78 governs air pollution emitted by ships operating internationally. It has been amended in 2008, introducing

amongst others lower limits for the sulphur content of fuel (some of which are related to standards included in the Directive).

The objective of this consultation is to collect the views of various stakeholders on possible revisions that are necessary to align the Directive with the 2008 amendment to IMO Annex VI and with revised ISO standards. Closing date, 5th January 2011

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/consultations/sulphur.htm>

CHEMICALS UPDATE

Commission asks Member States to Implement EU Chemicals Legislation

The European Commission is asking France, Italy, Luxembourg and Slovenia to update their chemicals legislation to comply with the Directive on the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures. These Member States have either not adopted all the measures necessary to implement this law at national level or have not yet officially informed the Commission that they are in place. On the recommendation of Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik, a reasoned opinion is being sent by the Commission. The four Member States have two months to comply with the request. Failing this, the Commission may refer them to the European Court of Justice.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases8>

Proposed Ban on Phosphates In Detergent

The European Commission has proposed to ban the use of phosphates and to limit the content of other phosphorous containing compounds in laundry detergents. The draft Regulation aims to reduce the phosphates found in waste water and to improve water quality. The draft Regulation does not affect detergents for automatic dishwashers or those used by professionals as technically and economically feasible alternatives are not yet considered to be available throughout the EU. However, EU countries can impose stricter rules on the phosphate content of these detergents in specific circumstances. The Commission will keep industry's progress in the development of technically and economically viable alternatives for automatic dishwasher detergents under review, in particular, the proposal foresees the need to re-assess the situation regarding automatic dishwasher detergents by 31 December 2014.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases9>

Legal Highs - Mephedrone

The European Commission today called for an ecstasy-like drug that is still legal in 12 EU countries to be banned. It asked the EU Member States to stop the free spread of the drug "mephedrone" across Europe by submitting it to control measures. Mephedrone is already illegal in 15 EU countries and has been linked to at least 37 deaths in the UK and Ireland alone. The Commission's proposal today would ban the manufacturing and the marketing of mephedrone, submitting it to criminal sanctions all over Europe. EU governments must now decide on whether to put these measures into force, voting by a qualified majority in the Council.

A scientific risk assessment carried out by the Lisbon-based European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) showed that mephedrone can cause acute health problems and lead to dependency, while a few fatalities related to its use have been reported across Europe. Mephedrone has no established medical value or other known legitimate purpose.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleases10>

Biocidal Products Update

The Commission have recently updated the list of substances not to be included in the Directive on the placing of biocidal products on the market. Products included : Formaldehyde; Benzoic acid; Sodium benzoate. For the full name of the products, please see the link.

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ2>

Plant Protection Product – Spirotetramat

The active substance spirotetramat, produced by Bayer CropScience AG, has been added to the list of products included in the Council Directive concerned with placing of plant protection products on the market.

Source: <3UriServ/LexUriServ.do3>

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

November

25th – 26th November: Competitiveness Council

29th – 30th November: Conference ENERI 2010 Infrastructures for energy. The ESFRI (The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) Forum will publish in November 2010 a new version of its European roadmap in the sector of research infrastructures for energy. The conference aims to stimulate the development of a strategy for the energy research infrastructures in the framework designed by the European SET-Plan.

end November: Commission responds to expert panel report on Mid-Term Evaluation of FP7

December

1st and 2nd December: Industry, Research and Energy Committee of European Parliament

7th December: STOA, Annual Lecture, Science Technology Options Assessment Unit of the European Parliament

8th December: Conférence "OMC-Net on impact assessment of public funded research". The OMC-NET scheme was designed as a complement to the European Research Area's Open Method of Coordination lead by ERAC (the European Research Area Committee).

9th – 10th December: ERAC meeting (the European Research Area Committee).

February

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



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