



Brussels News Update

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EU-African Union Scientific Partnership: €63 million to support research for Africa

The European Commission has launched a call for proposals entirely dedicated to research for Africa. This special initiative for Africa will address some of the science and technology objectives included in the EU-Africa Strategic Partnership agreed on by the European Commission and the African Union Commission in December 2007. Up to €63 million will be allocated to research projects in 2010 aiming to improve health conditions, and water and food security in Africa. Supported research activities will involve African partners, with the aim to strengthen Africa's research base. All projects will involve local stakeholders. Depending on the project, at least 2 or 3 partners must be established in an African country. The projects selected will foster capacity-building through the promotion of academic research and training, the setting up of networks, and the building of sustainable capacity for research for health.

Source: <http://eumonitor.net/>

Pilot joint programming initiative on Alzheimer's disease launched

On 22 July the European Commission called on EU Member States to pool their resources and better coordinate research efforts to combat Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative diseases. The proposals adopted by the Commission follow a 2008 recommendation by the Council of the European Union to launch a joint programming initiative in this field in 2009. The joint programming approach involves Member States voluntarily working together rather than separately to define, develop and implement a single strategic research agenda. It should enable Member States to develop a common vision of how to address major societal challenges that no one country is capable of resolving alone. Neurodegenerative disease research is being used as a pilot project for this approach, and so far 20 countries are participating. Joint programming to fight neurodegenerative disorders will, it is hoped, lead to more accurate diagnostic tools and more effective forms of treatment. To get the ball rolling on forming the strategic research agenda, the Commission has proposed taking action in four major areas: acting early to diagnose dementia and to reduce the risk of dementia in the first place; improving research coordination between EU countries; implementing sharing of best practices; and providing a forum to reflect on the rights, autonomy and dignity of patients.

There is a real and urgent need to pool and coordinate the efforts of European fundamental, clinical and social researchers in this field,' the Commission's proposal reads. 'Given that most research on neurodegenerative disease is still at the preclinical phase, publicly funded research will be instrumental in any breakthrough in such areas as research on biomarkers, the development of new criteria and methods for prevention and diagnosis, and the testing of new therapeutics in large-scale clinical trials.'

The proposal invites the Member States to develop a strategic research agenda and an implementation plan establishing priorities, milestones and timelines. This would include the following: 'exchanging information on national programmes, research activities and health care systems; identifying areas which would benefit from coordination, joint calls or the pooling of resources; facilitating transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral mobility and training; and exploring the joint exploitation of research infrastructures and the networking of research centres'. The pilot joint programming initiative is expected to be the first of many such cooperative efforts, and marks a step forward in the Commission's 'Europe for Patients campaign' for better healthcare in Europe.

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Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/1>

Consultation on the simplification of the EU RTD Framework Programmes

The European Commission plans to issue a Communication on simplification of the implementation of the EU RTD Framework Programmes in 2010. To this end, an online consultation has been launched on the Commission's website.

The consultation aims to gather suggestions and ideas for changes under the current legal basis, as well as more profound changes of the modes of implementation of EU research budget which would require adaptations to the legal basis. The consultation closes on 15 September 2009.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/1>

Studies on developing knowledge for an evidence-based research policy

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Research published prior information notices on 15 July 2009 for a set of complementary studies to develop and analyse indicators, as well as to draw policy implications and conclusions.

Following Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik's presentation of the Science, Technology and Competitiveness Key Figures Report 2008/2009 at the beginning of this year, the studies are designed to further develop an evidence-based monitoring system on progress towards the European Research Area (ERA) in the context of a knowledge-based economy. They should also serve as an evidence base for analysis of the impact of research, research policies and programmes on the competitiveness of Europe and of the contribution of research to growth and addressing societal and global challenges. These studies are entitled:

- ⇒ Analysis and regular update of bibliometric indicators
- ⇒ Internationalisation of business investments in R&D and their economic impact
- ⇒ Investments in joint and open R&D programmes and analysis of their economic impact
- ⇒ Patent costs: international comparison and analysis of the impact on the exploitation of R&D results by SMEs, universities and public research organisations
- ⇒ Measurement and analysis of knowledge and R&D exploitation flows, assessed by patent and licensing data
- ⇒ R&D investments and structural changes in sectors - quantitative and qualitative analysis, policy recommendations

The six studies, although fully independent of each other, are defined to be consistent in terms of scope, geographical, sectoral coverage and methodology. This will allow combining their results to analyse interactions between the production, diffusion and use of research and technology, as well as measure the impact of framework conditions and policy measures.

Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/2>

ERC Executive Agency reaches autonomy

The European Research Council (ERC) Executive Agency has recently reached administrative autonomy. Since the launch of the ERC in February 2007, its dedicated implementation structure operated under the Research Directorate-General as part of the European Commission. This structure has now been transformed into an autonomous Executive Agency with, currently, 200 staff members. The transition has been progressive and the Executive Agency was already formally established in December 2007.

Source: <http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/.pdf>

Review of ERC's structures and mechanisms

Following the Commission's decision of 11 March 2009 (C(2009) 1871), a panel of independent experts reviewed the structures and mechanisms of the European Research Council (ERC). Their report entitled *Towards a world class Frontier Research Organisation* has been published recently. The report stresses that ERC has "succeeded beyond expectations" in attracting outstanding scientists to serve on its peer-review panels and that it has remained free from political interference. There are concerns however about the long-term sustainability of the scheme under the present governance structure of the ERC which is thought to be complex and a "source of great frustration and ongoing low-level conflict". "At the most fundamental level there is an incompatibility between the current governance philosophy, administrative rules and practices and the stated goals of the ERC," the report says.

The panel also called for stronger "leadership and competent professionalism" and suggested involving scientists in the management team with a permanent committee on conflicts of interest to be set up to ensure that the scientists are not partial to their former research institutions or their own disciplines.

Other key conclusions include:

- ⇒ The roles of secretary-general and director of the executive agency should be merged into one post and a recognised scientist with administrative experience should be recruited. This scientist should report directly to the commissioner.
- ⇒ The ERC should expand in size and importance in the next framework programme (FP8) and ultimately evolve into a permanent Community structure.
- ⇒ Another independent review should be conducted of the project in two years' time.
- ⇒ If the review shows that structural changes are necessary, the ERC could be established under Article 171 of the EU Treaty, which allows research bodies to be set up which are accountable to the European Parliament and the European Council.

The Commission will respond to the report's recommendations and present its proposals on the future of the ERC by October 2009.

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid1> http://erc.europa.eu/PDF/final_report_230709.pdf

Links: <http://bulletin.sciencebusiness.net/1> <http://www.euractiv.com/1>

ERC Guide for Applicants: updated version 2009 is now available online

The European Research Council (ERC) has published a revised version of the Guide for Applicants. Changes regarding the ERC Starting Grant scheme were introduced, taking into account the current Work Programme.

Source: <http://www.earto.eu/f1.pdf>

European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

The EIT first draft rolling Triennial Work Programme, which looks at EIT's short and medium term future, has been sent to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission.

Source: <http://eit.europa.eu/pdf>

Report on SME participation in FP7 now available

The European Commission has published a report on SME participation in FP7.

It provides some key figures, which illustrate the overall achievements of SMEs two and a half years into FP7. It shows that SMEs are rightfully claiming a share of the benefits offered by FP7 but that there is still potential for further engagement.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/2.pdf>

CREST report: Internationalisation of R&D

This report summarises the results of the work done throughout 2008 by the CREST OMC Working Group on 'Internationalisation of R&D - Facing the Challenge of Globalisation: Approaches to a Proactive International Policy in S&T' with respect to the coordination of policy measures between the Member States, Associated Countries and the European Commission in variable geometries.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/3.pdf>

'People' Work Programme 2009 updated

The European Commission has published an updated version of the Work Programme 2009 for the Specific Programme "People". It replaces the older version of this document from August 2008.

Source: <ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/.pdf>

Guide on how to approach IP issues in CIP projects

The IPR helpdesk has published a guide on IP issues in Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) projects. The guide covers preliminary discussions before the start of a project, ownership and protection issues and use and dissemination issues.

Source: <http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org/1>

Commission launches 53 FP7 calls for proposals

The European Commission has published several calls for proposals in various thematic areas of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Thematic areas under the Cooperation Specific Programme include: 'Health' (three calls); 'Food, agriculture and fisheries, and biotechnology' (one call); 'Information and communication technologies' (two calls); 'Nanosciences, nanotechnologies, materials and new production technologies' (six calls); 'Energy' (four calls); 'Environment (including climate change)' (one call); 'Transport' (six calls); 'Socio-economic sciences and humanities' (four calls); 'Space' (one call); and 'Security' (one call).

Calls under the Capacities Specific Programme are dedicated to the following Themes: 'Research infrastructures' (two calls); 'Research for the benefit of SMEs' (one call); 'Regions of knowledge' (one call); - 'Research potential' (two calls); 'Science in society' (four calls); 'Activities of international cooperation' (four calls).

An additional seven cross-thematic calls, including calls for proposals under the three Public-Private Partnerships of the Recovery Plan, have also been published and combine up to five different Themes. Finally, the European Research Council (ERC) Starting Independent Researcher Grants (three sub-calls) are intended to support up-and-coming research leaders who are about to establish or consolidate a proper research team and to start conducting independent research in Europe.

Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/3> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/:PDF>

€610 million to support 106 new health research projects

A total of 106 health research projects will receive up to €610 million under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7). These projects cover issues such as diagnostics, new therapies and vaccines. They have been selected out of a total of 679 proposals through the third call for proposals of the Health Programme of FP7. The 106 successful projects will now enter into final negotiation phase.

The projects selected cover a wide range of research areas such as suitability, safety and efficacy of therapies, innovative therapies, brain and brain-related diseases, infectious diseases (HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, emerging epidemics), major diseases (diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases), rare diseases, and patient safety.

In detail, the main areas that will be funded are the following:

1. Biotechnology, Generic Tools and Medical Technologies for Human Health.
2. Translating Research for Human Health
3. Optimising the Delivery of Healthcare to European Citizens

In the selected proposals the small and medium sized enterprises (SME) have a participation rate of 15%, representing 14% of the requested budget.

Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/4>

New Partner Search Facility launched and New Calls in Research Potential

The 2010 calls for Research Potential in the FP7 Capacities sub-programme were launched on 30 July 2009. The ResPotNet team (European Network for Research Potential NCPs) is committed to support all potential participants in finding partners through the new Partner Search Facility at www.respotnet.eu. The ResPotNet site provides access to information on research potential policies and initiatives, open calls and past funded project, news, events, useful links, etc

The Research Potential Programme aims to help the convergence and outermost regions of the EU to realise their full research potential. The first call aims to enable the highest quality or the most promising research entities of significant size, (University Departments, Faculties, specialised Research Institutes or research laboratories with at least 10 permanent experienced researchers) based in the eligible regions, qualified in practically any S&T field to become actively integrated in the ERA. The EC will fund a total of €4 million per project. The deadline for submission is the 17th December 2009.

The second call aims to improve the Western Balkan Countries' (WBC) participation in FP7 and favouring brain-gain environments while accelerating the setting up of sustainable partnerships to boost regional cooperation. It will also help reinforce their research infrastructure/equipment. This call closes on the 15th October 2009.

Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/5>

Call on Research-driven Clusters: Find partners through the online RDC Database

A new call for transnational cooperation between regional research-driven clusters was launched on 30 July 2009, under the programme "Regions of Knowledge" (Capacities, 7th Framework Programme), in the field of "health-related economy".

TRANS REG NCP, the transnational network for the Regional National Contact Points, supports all research organizations, enterprises and regional authorities to participate in the programme and to find partners through the new online Research Driven Clusters (RDC) Database.

The "Regions of knowledge" programme aims to strengthen the research potential of European regions, by encouraging and supporting the development, across Europe, of regional "research-driven clusters", associating universities, research centres, enterprises and regional authorities. The actions undertaken in this area will enable European regions to increase their investments and develop their commitment in research which contributes to economic development. In the current call, proposals should support economic development by boosting the competitiveness of health-related economy.

Proposals are invited to address the following objective: to analyze and integrate the research agendas of actors in regional clusters, to improve integration of research actors in regional economies through a Joint Action Plan and to take measures towards its implementation, as well as to mentor regions of less developed research profile. The total indicative budget for this call is €16.95 million.

Deadline for submissions: 14 January 2010.

TRANS REG NCP (www.transregncp.eu) provides access to information on research-driven-clusters policies and initiatives, open calls and past funded project, news, events, useful links, etc. The RDC Database facilitates the emergence, operation and benchmarking of research-driven clusters. Validated proposal ideas are disseminated through the Network for highly competitive and successful projects to the EU call.

Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/6>

Tender: study on the quality of the patent system in Europe

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market and Services has published a call for tenders for a study on the quality of the patent system in Europe. The aim is to conduct an economic analysis of the quality of patent rights in order to propose effective policy solutions for the optimal functioning of the future patent system in Europe, considering its objectives to encourage innovation and the diffusion of new technology and knowledge. This should take into account the co-existence of national and European patents, as well as a future Community patent, which is currently being negotiated between Member States.

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Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/7>

Information and brokerage event on FP7 'Environment' Theme

An information and brokerage event on the 'Environment (including climate change)' Theme of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) will take place on 19 and 20 October in Yerevan, Armenia. The objective of the event is to bring together researchers and other stakeholders from the EU and Eastern European and Central Asian (EECA) countries and provide ground for discussion and networking within the scope of the 'Environment' Theme.

Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/8>

FCH JU Stakeholders General Assembly 2009

The Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH JU) stakeholders' general assembly will take place on 26 and 27 October in Brussels, Belgium and is focused on: the progress of the FCH JU and on forward planning of the research agenda, and an analysis of the market and the political developments affecting the commercialisation of fuel cell and hydrogen technologies.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/4> <http://cordis.europa.eu/9>

Europeans and the environmental impact of products

'Four out of five Europeans say that they consider the environmental impact of the products they buy', reveals a recently published survey. In the same survey Europeans were evenly divided about claims by producers on the environmental performance of their products while nearly half thought that a combination of increased taxes on environmentally-damaging products and decreased taxes on environmentally-friendly products would best promote eco-friendly products. There was also strong support for retailers to play a role in promoting environmentally-friendly products and for mandatory carbon labelling.

An EU-wide carbon footprint labelling scheme does not exist yet but, in December 2008, environment ministers requested the European Commission to investigate the possibility of introducing one. Currently, the Commission administers an ecolabel scheme, which has been rewarding environmentally friendly products with the Union's flower label since 1992.

Source: <http://europa.eu/4>

Link: <http://www.euractiv.com/2>



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