



Brussels News Update

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ERC Flagship Grant Scheme Launched

On 21 November 2007, the ERC launched its flagship Advanced Grant scheme for the years 2008-2013. Depending on the nature of the research, ERC Advanced Grants may be up to €3 500 000 for a period of 5 years.

Advanced Grants will target researchers who have already established themselves as exceptional leaders in their field. Interested scientists will need to take into account that applications will only have a chance of succeeding if the project is outstanding and the principal investigator can demonstrate an outstanding track record and leadership profile in terms of originality and impact of research achievements.

The application process and the evaluation methodology have been refined (compared to the first Starting Grant call). There will now be a single round of applications with a full proposal required at the outset. There will then be two rounds of evaluation with the second involving interviews with the principal investigator and the relevant evaluation panel.

ERC grants are open to researchers of any nationality, working or planning to work in Europe, and working in any field of science, scholarship or engineering. The selection process for these prestigious grants is based on an open competition with scientific excellence as the sole award criterion. Grants are awarded and managed according to simple procedures that maintain the focus on scientific excellence, encourage creativity and interdisciplinarity, and combine flexibility with accountability.

There are three subject areas with deadlines spread over a few months:

Physical Sciences and Engineering – 28 February 2008

Social Sciences and Humanities – 18 March 2008

Life Sciences – 22 April 2008

Links

ERC Fact Sheet on the "ERC Advanced Grant":

http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/AdG_Factsheet_2007.pdf

ERC Work Programme 2008: http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/wp2008_Final.pdf

Cordis – FP7 Ideas Programme: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ideas/home_en.html

Cordis News:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=14&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1197362486663&RCN=28728

Commission Confident of EIT Progress

The EIT has now been approved by ministers from member states and by the European Parliament but speaking at the Science Policy Bridge, Odile Quintin, Director General of DG Education confirmed that the Commission still expects half the funding to come from industry. She also indicated that she was confident that business will want to participate now that the EIT project is moving towards concrete proposals.

Mrs Quintin argued that the recommended priority areas – renewable energies and climate change – will be attractive to industry. She also asserted that the EIT's independence from political pressure will also be an asset, as its governing board will decide what projects it will support. Despite this independence, it seemed clear that she expects the first two projects to be within the priority areas recommended.

The governing body remains to be appointed and an identification committee is now being set up to undertake the process of proposing potential board members.

The process for establishing the two Knowledge & Innovation Communities (KICs) will be also defined by the governing body. The first ones are likely to emerge from existing networks since these may be far enough developed to take the next critical step from networks of exchange, to the 'operational' phase where they would implement coordinated RTD actions and teaching. Such networks might include innovation clusters and European Technology Platforms (ETPs). However, Mrs Quintin was adamant that the commission would not be 'setting things up' or engaging in 'back-seat driving'.

Mrs Quintin also confirmed that countries are lining up to bid to host the new institute, with Germany, Austria and Poland among those that have expressed a keen interest. Poland, said Mrs Quintin, had already pledged €1 billion to the institute in the event it gets sited in the country.

Links

Council – Compromise Text: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14699.en07.pdf>

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/eit-agreed-funding/article-168644>

New EU Renewables Law

An early draft of a forthcoming proposal for the contribution of renewables to EU energy supply gives an insight into how controversial national targets may be calculated, and how the EU system would be regulated.

In March 2007, EU leaders agreed to a 20% target for renewables in energy supply by 2020. The draft directive provides for a gradual increase in renewables targets from a 2005 baseline with milestones at 2014, 2016 and 2018.

Member states will be required to issue 'guarantees of origin' certificates (GOs) to heat or power producers and acquire enough of these from national suppliers or through trading of certificates to meet national targets.

The Commission is due to publish its formal proposal on 23 January.

Source

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/new-eu-renewables-law-takes-shape/article-168998>

Strategic Energy Technology Plan

The European Commission has proposed a Strategic Energy Technology Plan with the goal of boosting research into the new, low carbon technologies which Europe will need if it is to meet its climate change targets.

The EU has set itself targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020, and by 2050 it hopes to reduce emissions by 60 to 80%. Meeting these ambitious goals will require new technologies, and if Europe does not take the lead in their development, other areas of the world will. The Commission says energy research in Europe is currently under-funded, dispersed and badly coordinated. There are structural weaknesses in the energy innovation process, and public budgets for energy research have fallen substantially since the 1980s.

The new plan sets out a number of actions to tackle the fragmented nature of European energy research. These include the creation of European Industrial Initiatives, bringing together all the relevant resources and actors in a similar fashion to Joint Technology Initiatives.

The Commission also proposes the establishment of a European Energy Research Alliance, which will boost cooperation between the many scientific disciplines engaged in research that impacts upon energy technologies, such as physics, chemistry, materials science and engineering.

In order to ensure all policy makers and stakeholders in the energy sector are aware of the latest technologies and ideas, the Commission will set up and run a European Energy Technology System. This will provide the latest information on new technologies and barriers to uptake and further development.

Finally, and European Community Steering Group on Strategic Energy Technologies will enable Member States and the Commission to plan joint actions and coordinate policies and programmes.

The lack of funding for energy research is a major problem, and the Commission will present a Communication on financing low carbon technologies at the end of 2008. This will investigate resource needs and set out possible ways to leverage more investment from a range of sources.

Progress on the initiatives set out in the new action plan will be reviewed at a European Energy Technology Summit which will be held in 2009.

Source

Cordis:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=13&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1197362486663&RCN=28738

Links

Commission – SET Plan: http://ec.europa.eu/energy/res/setplan/communication_2007_en.htm

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-struggling-secure-funds-low-carbon-future/article-168615>

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/eu-seeks-world-leadership-energy-technologies/article-168522>

Philanthropic Contributions to Research

The European Commission has launched a forum to increase philanthropic contributions to research in Europe.

The European Forum on Philanthropy and Research Funding will be initially established for a period of three years and will examine issues such as the research funding policies of existing philanthropic organisations, as well as legal, fiscal and regulatory issues and governance and ethical issues.

The creation of the forum is just one in a series of actions being undertaken by the Commission. Others include studies on the feasibility of a European Foundation Statute and the role of philanthropy in universities' research funding.

According to experts, support for European research from the philanthropic sector is estimated at less than 3% of total research spending, compared with a figure of 4 to 5% in the USA.

The European Forum on Philanthropy and Research will be open to the participation of all European foundations and research stakeholders.

The programme of the forum will be carried out through a combination of research work, peer-learning events and working groups to which interested parties will be invited to participate.

The Commission proposed in November 2006 that Member States adopt a common approach when it comes to the tax treatment of foundations and the definition for tax purposes of a 'public benefit organisation'.

Link

http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/policy/philanthropy_en.htm

Source

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=1&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1197362486663&RCN=28801

ERA - Call for More Flexibility

European industry has asked for a change of emphasis for the European Research Area (ERA). The European Commission's Green Paper, on which stakeholder consultation has just been closed, has too narrow a focus in that it concentrates on public research systems, said industry representatives at a public hearing in the European Parliament on 20 November.

'The emphasis of the ERA should be extended to support flexibility of approach to knowledge-intensive activities,' explained Leif Kjaergaard, chairman of the Research and Technology working group of the European industry organisation Business Europe.

Currently, ERA policies concentrate strongly on 'the push side of the equation' - more research activity, facilitating researcher movement, creating infrastructure - whereas it is equally important to consider the pull-side. 'Therefore, it is necessary to create markets, intelligent customers and higher demand for research and innovation that can help European high-tech start-ups reach world class,' said Mr. Kjaergaard.

More precisely, European industry stakeholders say that the ERA should not encourage centralisation, but rather decentralisation, benefiting from the diversity of interests and experiences in Europe and creating research infrastructures unrestricted as far as possible by national and other boundaries.

The Commission is planning to launch five specific initiatives over the next few months, to help Member States identify joint public research programmes. It also plans to launch an initiative for a general partnership for virtual European research passports, for mobility and career

development; a legal framework to facilitate pan-European research infrastructures; a Commission recommendation for the management of IPR [intellectual property rights] in public research institutions and a common strategy for international science and technology cooperation.'

Source

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=17&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1197362486663&RCN=28720

Link http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/progress-on-debate/stakeholder-consultation_en.html

New CCS Directive

Under proposals to be published in January, CO₂ prevented from entering the atmosphere through the use of so-called carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology could be counted as not emitted under the EU emissions trading scheme.

The key features of the Commission's proposed directive on CCS are expected to be:

- Inclusion in EU emissions trading scheme (ETS) - CO₂ captured and stored will be credited as not emitted under the Emissions Trading Scheme. Storage permits would be issued by member states
- Rules for new installations - any large fossil fuel combustion plants built after the entry into force of the directive must "have suitable space on the installation site for the equipment necessary to capture and compress CO₂". However, the fitting of CCS equipment will not yet be mandatory.

In another important move, the Commission does not propose to subject CO₂ capture and transport to additional safety rules transport since there is no difference in risk associated with current activities.

The Commission will publish a package of energy measures on 23 January 2008 including a directive on CCS and a Communication on CCS demonstration projects

Link <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-plans-inclusion-co2-storage-carbon-trading-scheme/article-168338>

Carbon Emissions and Competitiveness

With discussions on worldwide regulation of carbon emissions expected as part of the continuing UN climate control process, the EU is beginning to consider the need for sectoral approaches, especially for energy intensive industries.

Industry groups and think tanks have recently raised questions about the impact of such agreements on the competitiveness of EU industry whose exports are more carbon intensive than those of China or the USA, and raised the spectre of plants being relocated outside Europe as a result.

The Commission is examining the idea of sectoral carbon regimes based on emissions reduction targets agreed by the industries as supported in the final report of the EU's High Level Group (HLG) on Competitiveness, Energy and Environment

Source

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/debate-heats-europe-carbon-competitiveness/article-168818>

Link Commission press release – HLG report:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1823&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

New CCS Test Plant

Norway is hoping to launch a test plant for carbon capture and storage (CCS) which would seek to implement a new, more efficient and cheaper methodology.

CCS had been promoted as a key contributor to lowering carbon emissions but has recently faced scepticism due to high costs, the lengthy time before commercially viable systems become available, and a concern over the possible leakage of CO₂ stored over a long period of time.

The test facility currently under construction at Mongstad is a small gas-fired power station generating heat and electricity simultaneously, and uses a process called Chilled Ammonia.

The process is considered riskier than the existing method using an amine solution to capture the CO₂ after the gas is burned but could allow carbon capture with considerably lower consumption of energy and significantly lower costs.

Source

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/norway-carbon-storage-plans-hinge-eu/article-168936>

Research Funding for Car Industry

MEPs have called on Member States to increase research and development (R&D) funding for the car industry to help it meet legally binding CO₂ targets. The call came in a report on the CARS 21 (Competitive Automotive Regulation System for the 21st Century) initiative, which was adopted by the European Parliament's Industry Committee on 21 November.

Among other things, the report calls for CO₂ limits to be fixed at 125g/km by 2015. 'Car manufacturers need years to develop a car; a binding legislation has to consider that,' said Dr Chatzimarkakis MEP, author of the report. 'Our CO₂ targets have to be of course ambitious but also realistic.' The Commission has called for CO₂ emissions to be reduced to 120g/km by 2012.

The report also calls on the Commission to permit higher CO₂ emissions if they are the result of fitting safety measures to the car and underlines the importance of research and development activities in helping the automotive sector achieve its CO₂ targets. As part of the drive to boost research funding in the sector, the report recommends that one of the first Knowledge and Innovation Communities of the forthcoming European Institute of Technology be dedicated to CO₂ reduction in vehicle technology.

Source

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=12&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1197362486663&RCN=28748

Link

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>

Stronger EU-China Research Collaboration

Leaders from the EU and China agreed to move towards more strategic scientific cooperation through the launch of EU-China joint research projects when they met at the China-EU Summit on 28 November.

The leaders also acknowledged the significant participation of Chinese researchers in the first calls for proposals under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), and agreed to facilitate the participation of European researchers in Chinese-funded programmes.

Both sides pledged to take all necessary steps to renew the China-EU Science and Technology Agreement, due to expire in December 2008. As a first step in this process, both sides will carry out an assessment of their cooperation.

The agreements came at the end of the China-EU Science and Technology Year (CESTY), which both sides judged to have been a very positive experience. The initiative brought together researchers and industry and showed an all-round willingness to strengthen existing scientific and technological cooperation.

Both the EU and China are partners in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project. Further strengthening their collaboration in the nuclear field, the summit saw an agreement to establish a bilateral agreement between EURATOM and China. The bilateral agreement is intended to complement ITER.

Both sides called for further progress within the China-EU Partnership on Climate Change, and in particular on research into near-zero emissions coal power generation technology through carbon capture and storage. Both China and the EU will step up their efforts to further enhance cooperation in technology development and transfer, state the summit conclusions.

Source

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=7&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1197362486663&RCN=28789

Link

http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vEN/Noticias_Documentos/20071202CHINA.htm

Several FP7 calls launched

The European Commission has published a number calls for proposals under all four specific programmes of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) namely Cooperation, Ideas, People and Capacities. There is also a call for proposals under the Euratom Specific Programme.

Full details of the calls are available at

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



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