



Brussels News Update

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Energy “Package” Launched

Following last year's Green Paper, the Commission put forward a series of proposals on 10 January 2007. These included plans for a 'unilateral' 20% reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions by 2020 in a bid to reduce the EU's dependency on imported fuels and trigger a new 'industrial revolution'. These were largely approved intact by the European Summit on 9 March which agreed an action plan to put in place a European energy policy by year 2009.

The main areas of progress were:

Greenhouse-gas reduction:

- A binding target to reduce EU emissions by 20% by 2020, regardless of progress made in international negotiations for a post-Kyoto agreement, and;
- A binding 30% target should other industrialised nations including the US take similar steps.

Renewable energies:

- A binding target for 20% of the EU's overall energy consumption to come from renewables by 2020, and;
- A binding minimum target for each member state to achieve at least 10% of their transport fuel consumption from biofuels. However, the binding character of this target is "subject to production being sustainable" and to "second-generation biofuels becoming commercially available".

Energy efficiency:

- Achieve the Commission's objective of saving 20% of the EU's energy consumption compared to projections for 2020;
- By 2008: Commission to make proposals for increased energy savings from office and street lighting
- By 2009: Commission to make proposals for increased energy savings from incandescent lamps and other lighting in private households.

Technologies

- A European Strategic Energy Technology Plan to focus R&D efforts on low carbon technologies, will be developed over the remainder of 2007 and presented to the Spring Summit in March 2008 and;
- On nuclear, the Commission chose to take an "agnostic" stance, leaving it up to member states to decide.

The Commission proposes that EU members be required to establish National Action Plans outlining specific objectives and sectoral targets for each of the renewable energy sectors - electricity, biofuels, heating and cooling. Progress will be monitored by the Commission in a series of biannual reports.

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-energy-summit-new-start-europe/article-162432>

Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/energy/energy_policy/index_en.htm

EUbusiness: <http://www.eubusiness.com/Environ/climate-change-summit.21/>

'Sea-Change' in EU Energy Research

The Commission has outlined plans for a future EU energy research strategy as part of its energy and climate-change package earlier this year.

The proposal, Towards a European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan), does not propose new radical initiatives but rather seeks to build on existing efforts, such as the EU research framework programme (FP7), European technology platforms, European Institute of Technology.

The Commission believes that current efforts on energy R&D, both at member state and EU level, are insufficient to face the twin challenges of climate change and energy-supply security,

The Commission points out that individual member state research programmes alongside additional public and private research "complete a picture of scattered, fragmented and sub-critical capacities". While the EU average (FP7 and EURATOM) will be raised to €886 million per year in 2007-2013, the US Energy Bill proposes \$4.4 billion for 2007 and \$5.3bn for 2008 and 2009 respectively.

The Commission proposes "transforming energy technology innovation" with a European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan) which should focus on a broad portfolio of technologies to develop both in the short and long term. Examples of such large-scale initiatives could include:

- Bio-refineries;
- sustainable coal and gas technologies;
- fuel cells and hydrogen;
- generation IV nuclear fission.

The Commission will consult established advisory groups (high-level group on competitiveness, energy and the environment and launch a public consultation on a

preliminary draft Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan). The plan should be finally approved by Spring 2008.

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/brussels-urges-sea-change-eu-energy-research/article-162272>

Towards a European strategic energy technology plan: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0847en01.pdf

Research Measures Agreed at Spring Council

A number of important research measures were agreed at the annual EU Spring Council, where Europe's Heads of State and Government get together to discuss European competitiveness.

The Commission will now develop recommendations for guidelines on cooperation and technology transfer between publicly funded research and industry and, 'as a matter of priority', put forward intellectual property rights (IPR) and patent strategies.

The Council supported the rapid establishment of Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs) in areas of strategic importance, and for initiatives based on Article 169, which allows the EU to participate in research programmes undertaken by several Member States. In both cases, the Council would like to see initiatives launched during 2007.

The EIT also received broad support and Ministers and the European Parliament plan to conclude their examination of the Commission proposal during the first semester of 2007, and to take a decision before the end of the year.

Cordis News:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=18&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1176218516830&RCN=27286

Council conclusions:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/93135.pdf

Barroso Confident on EIT

Having received the backing of the Spring Summit, Commission President José Manuel Barroso expressed confidence that the European Institute for Technology will receive the support of ministers and will quickly connect the three sides of the "education/research/innovation triangle".

Mr Barroso defended his innovation flagship during a debate in Brussels on 26 March. He underlined that the innovation gap with the US is closing, but also pointed to remaining weaknesses such as fragmentation of the EU's innovation potential, the lack of top-class excellence and low involvement of business in education and research. "For too long, the 'knowledge triangle' education-research-innovation has been disconnected," Barroso said.

The Commission president also pointed to the need for the private sector to support the EU's European Institute for Technology. Barroso felt confident that he now has the full support of the German EU Presidency for the EIT and that adoption of the EIT regulation should be possible before the end of 2007.

Euractiv.com :

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/european-institute-close-technology-gap/article-162790>

Online Preparation and Submission of FP7 Proposals

As the deadlines for the first calls for project proposals under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) approach, the new Electronic Proposal Submission Service (EPSS) has been launched to facilitate submitting proposals online.

The EPSS allows users to propose projects by creating their proposal completely online without having to download or save anything locally on their own personal computer. The service is available via the internet as a Web-based application and requires only a standard web browser, with no special software.

Cordis news:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP6_NEWS&ACTION=D&DOC=35&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1176218936780&RCN=27352

Cordis - Latest Calls: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>

Germany Introduces EU Scientific Visa Law

The German Government has amended its immigration law, making it easier for third country researchers to live and work in Germany.

Germany has become only the fourth country to transpose the EU law on scientific visas into national law, following Austria, Slovakia and Slovenia. Greece and France are currently in the process of implementing law, but still need to complete internal processes. The deadline for the transposition of the regulation into national law is October 2007, but it now seems unlikely that all Member States will make the deadline.

The German government believes that reducing red tape for scientists from outside the EU to live and work in Europe will make Germany more attractive as a location for research and innovation

European Research Area: http://ec.europa.eu/eracareers/index_en.cfm?l1=25

Cordis News

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_PRES&ACTION=D&DOC=6&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1176219204983&RCN=27416

Commission Launches Debate on 'Green' Tax Reform

Shifting tax burdens from labour to environmentally damaging activities is one of the main options of a new Green Paper launched on 28 March by Commissioners Dimas and Kovacs.

With climate change and energy security issues high on the EU's agenda, the Commission wants to begin a broad consultation on the use of market-based instruments to stimulate sustainable consumption and production.

The Green Paper on the use of market-based instruments to support energy and environment objectives looks at how taxes, charges, subsidies and tradable permits can help realise environmental and energy objectives by taking into account the hidden costs of unsustainable behaviour and production

The consultation process is open until 31 July 2007.

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/commission-launches-debate-green-tax-reform/article-162858>

Commission: Press release:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/430&format=HTML&aged=0&language=en&guiLanguage=en>

Food Pesticide Levels

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has expressed doubts over proposed Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) for pesticides in member states. At the same time, the European Parliament heard calls for a 50% pesticide-reduction target.

EU-wide MRLs are already set for around 250 active substances. The Commission submitted a list of the highest MRLs currently applied at national level in September 2006 for assessment by the ESFA, with the aim of establishing harmonised national levels. This is a precondition for the Commission's 2005 regulation on the MRLs of pesticides to become fully operational.

Out of 236 active substances examined by the EFSA, 92 were found unlikely to present a risk to consumers. However the first screening of the remaining 144 substances "could not exclude a potential consumer risk", ESPA stated in a report published on 15 March 2007.

The Commission's proposed thematic strategy on the sustainable use of pesticides which the Agriculture Council is expected to debate in June 2007, will run complementary to the regulation on the MRLs of pesticides.

Also in March, a hearing in the European Parliament organised by the Party of European Socialists (PSE) debated the Commission's proposed 'thematic strategy' on the sustainable use of pesticides, following the Environment Council's recent backing of the strategy.

The Pesticides Action Network called for the introduction of a European-wide target to reduce the frequency of pesticide use by 50% over ten years. Lene Graversen, of the Danish environment ministry, said that the most important lesson her country had learned, and which should be adopted in the National Action Plans, was the inclusion of fixed goals, the inclusion of the public and media in the debate and the use of thorough economic analysis to create support for monitoring and to make measures easier to implement.

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/eu-watchdog-raises-concern-food-pesticide-levels/article-162525>

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/ngos-call-50-pesticide-reduction-target/article-162254>

ESFA:

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/etc/medialib/efsa/science/praper/mrl.Par.0010.File.dat/list_active_substances.pdf

Regulation on maximum residue levels of pesticides: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2005/l_070/l_07020050316en00010016.pdf

PSE Hearing: <http://www.socialistgroup.eu/gpes/newsdetail.do?lg=en&id=30009&href=home>

Surface Water Pollutants

The European Parliament's Environment Committee has added 28 substances to a proposed list of pollutants - pesticides, heavy metals and others - to be eliminated from surface waters by 2015, in a vote that considerably tightens initial proposals made by the Commission.

The proposal for a directive on environmental-quality standards for surface waters was put forward by the Commission in July 2006. The draft listed a series of 41 chemicals considered dangerous to the environment and human health that would need to be eliminated from surface waters by 2015.

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/meps-bolster-clean-surface-water-law/article-162850>

DG Environment: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-dangersub/surface_water.htm

Parliament Sets Up Climate Change Committee

The European Parliament has set up a temporary committee on climate change. The term of office for the Committee will be 12 months, when it may be extended with Parliament's approval. In addition, temporary committees typically have no legislative power and since their powers are decided as they are set up, Parliament cannot increase nor reduce the scope of those powers.

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/parliament-sets-climate-change-committee/article-162509>

International Women in Science Conference

An international conference on women in science, entitled 'The way forward', will be held in Heidelberg, Germany from 9 to 11 May.

Organised by the EU-funded SET-Routes project, the event will bring together scientists, politicians and other decision-makers, with the aim of inspiring participants to take action that will help attract women into science and keep them there.

Cordis News:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP6_NEWS&ACTION=D&DOC=15&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1176218936780&RCN=27422

Conference Information: <http://www.set-routes.org/conference/index.html>

New Funding Award for Young Researchers

The Louis-Jeantet Foundation has announced the launch of a new award to go to outstanding young researchers in the field of biomedicine.

As of 2010, the Foundation will award a 'Louis-Jeantet Young Investigator Career Award' to promising young independent researchers in the biomedical field, who have been supported for at least two years by the 'Starting Independent Research Grant' programme of the newly launched European Research Council (ERC).

'This cooperation with the European Research Council will enable the Foundation to extend its activities by supporting highly promising independent investigators at the beginning of their career,' said Professor Bernard C. Rossier, the secretary of the Scientific Committee of the Louis-Jeantet Foundation.

The Foundation hopes the initiative will contribute to encouraging the world's most outstanding next-generation biomedical researchers to establish themselves and remain in Europe.

Cordis News:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=21&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1176218516830&RCN=27230

Louis-Jeantet Foundation: <http://www.jeantet.ch/>



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