



European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences
Europäische Vereinigung für Chemische und Molekulare Wissenschaften
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EU Energy Research Lacks Focus

A closer link needs to be created between research, climate change and economic objectives, says the Commission.

The report, 'The state and prospects of European energy research', published by the Commission on 30 January, compares community and member-state R&D portfolios with those of major competitors the US and Japan.

While Europe as a whole (Commission and member states taken together) puts more public resources into non-nuclear energy research than the US and Japan, its efforts are often spread out and unconnected and end up delivering fewer results in return.

In response to this, the Commission has demanded more centralised effort with an unspecified increase in energy research spending with a Strategic Energy Technology Plan due in 2008.

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-energy-research-lacks-focus-study-finds/article-161351>

Commission (DG Research): http://ec.europa.eu/research/energy/pdf/portfolios_report_en.pdf

Cordis News:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=27040

European Research Council Launch

The European Research Council was officially launched in Berlin on 27 February. Politicians welcomed the announcement that EU-funded research will be based on excellence and independent decisions by scientists, without interference from politics.

"The ERC's Scientific Council - not the European Commission, or anyone else - is responsible for scientific strategy and implementation. ERC operations will be autonomous, through an Executive Agency," explained Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik on the functioning of the European Research Council.

"The independence of science in selecting talents and projects to be funded is the prerequisite for scientific excellence as the only criterion for awarding funds. The best ideas will succeed in the European competition. This justifies the sovereignty of science vis-à-vis politics," said the German Education and Research Federal Minister Annette Schavan.

Euractiv.com <http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/politics-kept-european-research-council/article-162033>

Cordis News

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=4&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1173705733904&RCN=27219

European Research Council <http://erc.europa.eu/>

Scrap Funds for 'Dirty Energy'

The High-Level Group on Energy, Competitiveness and the Environment advising the Commission on energy issues has recommended phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies.

The group, set up by the Commission in December 2005, comprises several commissioners and members of national governments as well as representatives of industry, civil society and regulators at national and EU level.

The report's main conclusion is that public funds in support of environmentally harmful technologies should eventually be scrapped. But the report stops short of naming specific industrial sectors in which the group believes that subsidies should eventually be phased out. Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas and his enterprise and industry counterpart, Günter Verheugen - both members of the high-level group - have frequently been at odds over the issue, the last time over binding legislation to reduce CO2 emissions from the car industry.

Euractiv.com <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/panel-urges-eu-scrap-funds-dirty-energy/article-162045>

Commission: Third report of the High Level Group on Competitiveness, Energy and the Environment

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/environment/hlg/doc_07/third_report_27_02_2007.pdf

Consultation on Carbon-Storage Risks to Be Launched

The Commission is launching an online public consultation on potential risks, particularly environmental, from new technology allowing CO₂ emissions from power plants to be stored underground.

The planned consultation comes in the wake of the Commission's energy and climate- change package of 10 January 2007, which highlighted the importance of CCS in creating "a low CO₂ fossil fuel future", especially given Commission estimates that: "Coal and gas account for over 50% of the EU's electricity supply and will remain an important part of our energy mix."

Drilling recently started on an FP6 funded underground test storage facility for CO₂ (carbon dioxide) near the German town of Ketzin, west of Berlin. During the next two years, some 60,000 tonnes of CO₂ will be injected into a saline aquifer where it will be stored at a depth of over 700 metres underground.

The consultation began on 19 February and will run until 16 April 2007.

Commission Consultation website: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/ccs/consult_en.htm
Commission: Sustainable Power Generation from Fossil Fuels
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0843:FIN:EN:HTML>
FP6 project <http://www.co2sink.org/>

Lisbon Goals Need Revised Energy Policy

The European Parliament says that improving energy efficiency must be at the centre of efforts to fulfil Europe's Lisbon objectives of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

"The EU should strive to become the most resource- and energy-efficient economic area in the world," states the resolution, adding that "the Lisbon Strategy can be a success only if further efforts are made to establish a common energy policy".

The report adds that becoming a leader in energy-efficient technologies and renewable energies will provide Europe with "huge economic potential" on the world market while contributing to the fight against global warming.

Euractiv.com <http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/lisbon-goals-unattainable-revised-energy-policy-meps/article-161745>
European Parliament: Lisbon Strategy: MEPs urge action on labour market, innovation and energy http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/004-3012-043-02-07-901-20070208IPR02893-12-02-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm

Car Manufacturers Face Mandatory Emissions Cuts

Reducing average carbon dioxide emissions from cars by 25% from current levels by 2012, is the central goal of an ambitious new strategy put forward by the European Commission to substantially reduce CO₂ emissions from cars sold in the EU. New technologies are expected to play the largest role in cutting emissions.

Until now, the Commission has relied on voluntary commitments from the automotive industry to reduce CO₂ emissions from cars. However, a Commission review found that these voluntary measures have been only partially successful, and stronger, legally binding measures are needed if the EU's car industry is to meet its CO₂ targets.

In the longer term, the Commission strategy calls for research aimed at reducing emissions from new cars to an average of just 95g CO₂/km by 2020. The Commission's core research priorities in the automotive field are the development of clean renewable fuels and vehicles and intelligent vehicles and roads

The European car industry is highly critical of the EU's plans while environmentalists accuse the EU of weakening the targets. The strategy will now be discussed by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The Commission will then implement the strategy based on their responses.

Cordis News:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=9&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1173705733904&RCN=27096

Commission proposal: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/co2/co2_home.htm

New Fuel Quality Standards

In a further move on reducing carbon emissions the Commission has proposed new fuel-quality standards in CO₂ and other noxious pollutants emitted by petrol refining and use. The new standards also encourage increased blending with biofuels.

The 1998 fuels quality directive sets EU-wide specifications for petrol, diesel and gasoil used in cars, trucks and other vehicles including inland waterway barges, tractors locomotives and machinery. The Commission said it is revising the standards to:

- Reflect developments in fuel and engine technology,
- reduce CO₂ emissions, and;
- meet air-quality objectives set out in a 2005 clean-air strategy.

The new standards aim to achieve, by 2020, a 10% reduction in CO₂ emissions along the whole product life-cycle, when petrol and diesel is refined, transported and used.

The proposed new standards will also allow increased blending with biofuels - including up to 10% ethanol - which emit less CO₂ along their life-cycle. The measure, Dimas said, should "open the way for a major expansion in the use of biofuels, especially second-generation biofuels".

The standards also aim to cut pollution from fuel burning with two additional measures due to take effect from 1 January 2009:

- A cut in sulphur emissions from diesel from 15 parts per million (ppm) to no more than 10 ppm. This should help cut emissions of dust particles causing lung damage, although this will come at the expense of increased CO₂ emissions from refineries as the processing needed to achieve requires more energy, and;
- reducing PAHs (Poly Aromatic Hydrocarbons) emissions from diesel by a third, which should also lead to a reduction in emissions of particulate matter.

A revised version of the 2003 biofuels directive is scheduled to be proposed in July or September

Euractiv.com <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-aims-oil-firms-way-low-carbon-future/article-161368>

Commission: Stakeholder consultation on revision of fuel quality directive
http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/fuel_quality/library

Commission Policy on Open Access

Scientific publishers fear that the Commission's plans to support online open access to scientific information will undermine their businesses.

In Spring 2006, a public consultation was held on a study concerning the scientific publishing market. The report gave an economic analysis of European scientific publication markets and made a series of policy recommendations.

On 14 February, the Commission adopted a communication on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation. The communication deals with the functioning of the scientific publication system and its impact on research, addressing the issues of access, dissemination and preservation of scientific information.

The communication also announces a series of measures planned to be taken at EU level, namely to support new ways of promoting better access to scientific information online and to preserve research results digitally. It also explains how the Commission is set to deal with open access in the projects it will fund under its seventh framework programme for research (FP7).

The main challenge, according to the Commission, is to find a win-win situation for both scientists and scientific publishers. This means giving the research community rapid and wide dissemination of results, facilitated by new information and communication technologies and for scientific publishers to have fair remuneration for investing in tools and mechanisms to organise the information flows and the peer- review system.

The international association of scientific, technical and medical publishers (STM) has issued a joint declaration stressing the role that specialist-publishers play in supporting the research community in Europe and ensuring the integrity of scientific research. "Publishers organise, manage and financially support the peer- review processes of STM journals. Peer-reviewed journals play an irreplaceable role in authenticating articles through registration, certification, dissemination and editorial improvement," argues STM.

Euractiv.com <http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/open-access-scientific-publishing-draws-controversy/article-161757>

Commission press release:

<http://www.europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/190&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

More Research Needed On Nanotech Safety

Research on nanotechnologies' potential benefits is not enough, argues a United Nations report, which calls for more investment into investigating the effects of nanoparticles on human health and the environment.

The report doubts the adequacy of current regulatory frameworks to deal with the special characteristics of nanotechnology. The political debate on regulating nanotechnologies is just beginning, whereas nanotech products are already being mass-produced.

A number of recent EU events have raised this issue and at a recent conference on nanoscience and safety the Commission was asked to produce a document on safety and competitiveness of European nanotechnologies, including a road map defining actions, responsibilities, and timings.

UN Report http://www.unep.org/geo/yearbook/yb2007/PDF/7_Emerging_Challenges72dpi.pdf

CORDIS: FP7 - Nanosciences, nanotechnologies, materials & new production technologies (NMP) http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/cooperation/nanotechnology_en.html

Conference on Nanoscience: Safety for Success <http://www.fmnt.fi/ntss/index.html>

Ethical Procedure for Stem Cell Research

EU Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik has asked the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE) to provide an opinion on how to improve the current ethical procedure for human embryonic stem cell research.

In 2000, the EGE provided an opinion which formed the basis of strict ethical guidelines set up in the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) to deal with human embryonic stem cell research.

But with FP7 now up and running, Mr Potocnik said it was time to review the procedure. As in FP6, funding of embryonic stem cell research will continue on a case-by-case basis. Certain areas will not receive any funding under FP7. These include human cloning for reproductive purposes, research intended to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable, and research intended to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or the purpose of stem cell procurement.

European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE)

http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/index_en.htm

EU Ministers Support Restrictions on Pesticides

The Environment Council has backed Commission proposals for the sustainable use of pesticides on 20 February, but left hard legislation for Agriculture colleagues to decide at a June meeting after the German Presidency pushed a disputed change in agenda.

The Commission presented its 'Thematic Strategy' on the sustainable use of pesticides on 12 July 2006, as part of the Environment Action Programme. However, the German Presidency has shifted the legislative proposal to the Agriculture Council.

The strategy consists of proposals for:

- a regulation on authorisation procedures for plant protection products;
- a framework directive laying down common objectives and requirements on how pesticides are to be managed.

The proposed regulation on the placing of plant protection products on the market, would update an existing 1991 directive on the issue, and aims to:

- Tighten environmental and health criteria for approving active substances before they are allowed at EU level;
- reduce the time limit to approve new substances from 4-6 years to two years;
- encourage the replacement of dangerous substances by placing them on a "candidate list" for substitution;
- introduce compulsory mutual recognition of authorised products within a specified geographical zone, and;
- present new rules concerning data protection, under which active substances will no longer have to be renewed every 10 years but only once, after an initial 10 year period.

The thematic strategy proposes banning aerial spraying except for strictly defined cases, national action plans, certification and control of equipment, training for professional users and protection of the aquatic environment.

The Environment Council conclusions, adopted 20 February 2007, called for:

- specific measures to protect surface water and groundwater to reduce the risk of pesticides to the aquatic environment;
- greater coherence between the water framework Directive (WFD) and the proposed legislation on pesticides;
- the use of voluntary as well as mandatory measures to reduce the administrative burden;
- widening the strategy to cover biocides;
- the development of integrated pest management methods and procedures,
- more Community funding to support the sustainable use of pesticides, and;
- continued action to protect developing countries from the risks of pesticides.

Euractiv.com <http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/eu-ministers-support-restrictions-pesticides/article-161881>

Environment Council: Conclusion on pesticides

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/envir/92864.pdf

Waste Recycling Provisions

MEPs have agreed on setting binding targets for waste reduction and the introduction of a five-step hierarchy that gives priority to prevention, reuse and recycling over landfills.

The main provisions of the reports include:

- The introduction of a five-step waste 'hierarchy' that gives priority to prevention, reuse and recycling over landfills;
- EU waste-prevention targets to stabilise waste production by 2012 to the level produced in 2008, and for waste production to start declining from 2020, and;
- a rejection of the Commission's proposal to reclassify incineration from "disposal" to "recovery" for energy production.

Euractiv.com <http://www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/parliament-votes-favour-waste-recycling-incineration/article-161681>

Parliament: Major recycling operation for Europe's waste policy

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/064-3005-043-02-07-911-20070208IPR02886-12-02-2007-2007-false/default_en.htm

Produced for EuCheMS by

Glenn Vaughan, EuCheMS European Policy Consultant
tel. +32 473 96.44.68 email. Glenn@GVCBrussels.eu

EuCheMS AISBL - Registered office Avenue E. Van Nieuwenhuysse 4, B-1160 Brussels