



Brussels News Update

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Contents

- 'Twin city headquarters' for EIT headquarters?
- Further delays on EU decision on GM crops
- Boosting the competitiveness of Europe's pharmaceutical industry
- IPRs and the climate problem
- Towards a European Observatory on Nanotechnologies
- European Chemicals Agency takes over
- New chapter opens in EU-China Climate Change Partnership
- Labelling 'greener' products
- Converting knowledge into socio-economic benefits
- Harmonising EU chemical classification practices with international standards
- Tougher EU-wide water quality standards
- EU leads way in nanotech risk research
- ERA-NET 2008 Call
- European Research Area Board members appointed
- New Unique Registration Facility launched
- EU eyes stricter standards for biofuel imports
- Clean coal technologies and Carbon capture and storage in South Africa
- 'No quality without equality'
- 'Ljubljana Process' and ERA
- REACH: EU firms urged to register chemicals
- Water scarcity concerns growing
- Adoption of European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
- Initiative to facilitate mobility in vocational education and training

'Twin city headquarters' for EIT headquarters?

Austria and Slovakia have joined forces in the race for hosting the headquarters of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). The concept envisages a distribution of the EIT's four administrative bodies between the two countries' capital cities: The governing board as well as the internal auditing body would be situated on the Slovakian side, while the executive director and executive committee would be located in Austria's capital. The power of decision now lies with the European Council. It is possible that the choice will be made as early as June 2008, but the Council will have to take a decision no later than 12 months after the regulation establishing the EIT, which was adopted in March 2008.

Source:

http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29414

Link:

http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/70125074-164b-11dd-880a-0000779fd2ac,dwp_uuid=70662e7c-3027-11da-ba9f-00000e2511c8.html

Further delays on EU decision on GM crops

The Commission has referred a number of pending GMO approvals (two GM maize crops, and a potato modified to produce extra starch) back to the EU's Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for further review of scientific evidence of the GMOs' potential effects on the environment and human health. The EU executive also asked its services to find a technical solution to the issue of low-level presence of non-approved in feed and foodstuffs before the summer.

Sources: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/commission-hesitant-approve-gm-crops/article-172209>

Link:

http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/12b51670-1c2f-11dd-8bfc-000077b07658.dwp_uuid=70662e7c-3027-11da-ba9f-00000e2511c8.html

Boosting the competitiveness of Europe's pharmaceutical industry

The European Commission and the pharmaceutical industry began work today on implementing the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), a public-private research initiative to boost the competitiveness of Europe's pharmaceutical industry. IMI aims to remove severe bottlenecks in the drug development process through innovative research projects, hence to accelerate the discovery and development of new medicines. It will launch later this year promising research projects in the areas of brain disorders, metabolic and inflammatory diseases. IMI is a unique public-private partnership between the European Commission and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA). Over the next five years, those two primary partners in the IMI Joint Undertaking (IMI JU) will invest €1 billion each, with an initial €123 million being channelled into research projects already in the 2008 funding period.

Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP7_NEWS&ACTION=D&RCN=29402

<http://imi.europa.eu/>

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/662&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.comL1>

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1a3fbdd2-164e-11dd-880a-0000779fd2ac.html>

IPRs and the climate problem

How can intellectual property rights (IPRs) be used to promote the development of the clean technologies needed to tackle climate change? This was the question on everybody's lips at the European Patent Forum held in May. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated that greenhouse gas emissions can be significantly reduced with current and near-ready technologies. The question is whether the current intellectual property rights (IPR) system is helping or hindering the implementation and deployment of these technologies. Other arguments in favour of IPRs include the fact that most climate friendly technologies are not patent protected, although this is more relevant in some sectors than others, and furthermore developing countries rarely cite IPRs as a major problem in their official reports to the UNFCCC.

Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29418

Towards a European Observatory on Nanotechnologies

Establishing a permanent European Observatory on Nanotechnologies is one of the goals of the EU-funded observatoryNANO project, which started recently. ObservatoryNANO is funded under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and brings together 16 project partners from ten countries, including scientists, industry, SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), economists, social scientists, philosophers, investment consultants, trade associations and health and safety institutes. The funding amounts to €4 million for four years.

The observatory will present science-based and economic expert analysis across different technology sectors and establish a dialogue with decision makers and others regarding the benefits and opportunities of nanotechnologies, balanced against barriers and risks. More immediately, the project intends to integrate the analysis of scientific and technical developments in the field of nanotechnology with economic impacts, so that decision-makers will be provided with the information necessary to make informed decisions. In addition, the project partners will look at societal impacts and ethical issues, potential environmental, health and safety (EHS) risks and the need to develop new standards.

Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29419

European Chemicals Agency takes over

On 1 June, the European Chemicals Bureau (ECB) will hand over its responsibilities to the newly created European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). ECHA, located in Helsinki, Finland, will be responsible for managing the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction processes for chemical substances. Its work will thus ensure a benchmark of standards and consistency across the whole of the EU. The ECHA is also responsible for maintaining the standards set out in the REACH regulation.

Sources: <http://echa.europa.eu/>
http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29398

New chapter opens in EU-China Climate Change Partnership

The recent International Forum on Climate Change Science & Technology Innovation in Beijing brought together world leaders and experts in the area of green technology to discuss the challenge of climate change and the opportunities for innovative solutions. During the Forum, EU outlined the next chapter in the EU-China Partnership on Climate Change, which focuses on developing clean energy production and renewable energies.

The partnership contains two concrete co-operation goals, to be achieved by 2020: a) to develop and demonstrate, in China and the EU, advanced 'zero-emissions' coal technology and b) to significantly reduce the cost of key energy technologies and promote their deployment and dissemination. Areas, where future collaboration has been agreed upon, include the development and demonstration of advanced zero emissions coal technology by 2020, based on carbon capture and storage and the setting up of a Sino-European clean energy centre, focusing on coal and energy savings in buildings. Further collaboration is also expected on establishing the Euro-Chinese Institute for Clean and Renewable Energy, and the study of relations between Climate Change and Mega-Cities, as well as the climate impacts and adaptation in vulnerable regions and sectors.

Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.simpledocument&N_RCN=29390

Labelling 'greener' products

An existing EU labelling scheme for energy-using products should be expanded to cover all manufactured goods, says the latest draft of an upcoming Commission action plan on sustainable consumption and production (SCP). While not all products will be required to physically bear a label, they will nonetheless be scrutinised on the basis of a life-cycle assessment of their 'eco performance', including energy and resource use. Products that do not meet the minimum criteria set out in the revised directive would be kept off the EU market. 'Best performing' products, on the other hand, would be encouraged, including through preferential public procurement rules that are established based on a common benchmark for a given product group. As for fiscal incentive mechanisms like tax breaks for green goods, these "will be analysed further and the Commission will assess the need for further initiatives

at Community level regarding fiscal or financial incentives," according to the draft. The EU's voluntary eco-label scheme will also be expanded according to the draft proposal, with the process for obtaining an eco-label to be "streamlined and simplified".

Source:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/labels-help-consumers-choose-greener-products/article-171961>

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/ambitious-eu-eco-standards-making/article-171504>

Converting knowledge into socio-economic benefits

The Commission adopted a Recommendation on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities of universities and other public research organisations. The Recommendation provides public research organisations (PROs) with operational principles to more effectively manage and exploit intellectual property and it is addressed to all Member States. To improve the management of IP by European universities and PROs, the Commission Recommendation offers a set of key policy principles which Member States are asked to follow when introducing or adapting national guidelines or other measures regarding knowledge transfer. The Recommendation also includes a "Code of Practice" for universities and other PROs, offering more operational principles which they should rely on when developing or reviewing institutional policies.

Sources:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/555&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29328

http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/ip_recommendation_en.pdf

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/eu-pushes-better-knowledge-transfer/article-171564>

Harmonising EU chemical classification practices with international standards

The Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety voted overwhelmingly in favour of MEP Amalia Sartori's reports on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures. The proposed regulation will bring the principles of the Globally Harmonised System for classification and labelling of chemical substances and mixtures (developed in a UN-context and currently operating in New Zealand and Japan) into European legislation while building on the existing EU system, in line with REACH.

Source: [http://www.epp-](http://www.epp-ed.eu/press/showPR.asp?PRControlDocTypeID=1&PRControlID=7223&PRContentID=12619&PRContentLg=en)

[ed.eu/press/showPR.asp?PRControlDocTypeID=1&PRControlID=7223&PRContentID=12619&PRContentLg=en](http://www.epp-ed.eu/press/showPR.asp?PRControlDocTypeID=1&PRControlID=7223&PRContentID=12619&PRContentLg=en)

Links:

http://www.chemsec.org/issues/GHS/080402_GHS_vote.php

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/green-groups-slam-meps-backing-chemical-classification-overhaul/article-171361>

Tougher EU-wide water quality standards

In May's vote on a draft directive on surface water quality standards, the Environment Committee adopted several amendments that should serve as a basis for negotiations with the Council:

- More substances to be controlled by 2015 and more to be banned by 2025
- Mixing zones - best available water techniques need to be ensured
- Call for separate standards for living organisms and sediments

The Environment Committee says that a further 31 water pollutants, including dioxins and PCBs, should either be considered for the Commission's proposed list of those that must meet EU water quality standards by 2015, or even, if classified as hazardous, be banned from EU surface waters by 2025.

Source: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/064-28137-127-05-19-911-200805051PR28136-06-05-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/meps-stand-plans-ban-chemicals-water/article-172251>

EU leads way in nanotech risk research

A new analysis by the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies (PEN) indicates that European nations are investing nearly twice as much as the U.S. in research primarily aimed at addressing the potential risks of nanotechnology.

Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29370
<http://www.nanotechproject.org/news/archive/ehs-update/>

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/study-finds-eu-leading-way-nanotech-safety/article-171831>

ERA-NET 2008 Call

This is, most likely, the last possibility, for 2008 and 2009, to submit proposals for ERA-NETs or ERA-NET Plus actions of a horizontal nature (cutting across several themes in the Cooperation workprogramme or Parts of the Capacities programme or not directly linked to any of the cooperation themes). The current planning for the 2009 Workprogramme does not foresee any call for horizontal ERA-NETs during 2009. Regarding the part of the 2008 ERA-NET call dealing with Conferences and other support actions, with a total budget of Million € 0,7, proposals for "Support actions reviewing coordination and integration of research programmes being of a horizontal nature" are welcome. Again, the current planning for the 2009 Workprogramme does not foresee any call for such proposals during 2009.

Source:

<http://cordis.europa.eu/wire/index.cfm?fuseaction=article.Detail&rcn=17334>

Links:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=usersite.FP7DetailsCallPage&CALL_ID=87

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/coordination/home_en.html

European Research Area Board members appointed

The names of the 22 men and women who will make up the new European Research Area Board (ERAB) have been announced. The members are well-known personalities from the world of science, academia and industry, whose job it will be to provide expert advice to the European Commission on how to shape and implement the European Research Area (ERA). The new ERAB is expected to develop and evaluate policy initiatives and actions aimed at meeting the goals of the ERA. Its principal task will be to provide an annual report on the state of the European Research Area (ERA). It will also be able to provide opinions on elements of the ERA, garner the views of the Member States' research and technology consultative bodies, and organise workshops as well as a bi-annual assembly.

Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29333
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/erab/>

New Unique Registration Facility launched

A new service called Unique Registration Facility (URF) has been launched on CORDIS to facilitate the preparation of grant agreements between participants and the European Commission. Thanks to the new service, participants in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and other programmes managed by the Research Directorate General will no longer have to submit their legal and financial information each time a new grant agreement is in the pipeline. The new service will also make it possible for participants to see the legal and financial data the Commission holds on them. As a result, they will be able to suggest changes and updates. Furthermore, the unique identification of each participant will help the production of statistical reports. It will also be possible to track organisations from proposal to negotiation stage. The URF is only the first module of a participant portal currently under development. In the future, this portal is intended to become the central means of communication between participants and the Commission.

Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29395

Link:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/urf_en.html

EU eyes stricter standards for biofuel imports

The European Union is considering stringent social and environmental criteria for imports of biofuels. The sustainability criteria under discussion would in effect bypass World Trade Organisation rules forbidding biofuel bans. By excluding those products not meeting the criteria from its biofuels target of a 10 per cent contribution to the fuel mix by 2010, the EU would deprive those products of government support, removing incentives to import them. One option under discussion is to exclude imports from countries that have not ratified a range of international agreements on labour and environmental standards, including the Kyoto protocol on global warming. Diplomats from EU member states have been unable to agree on how tough the criteria should be.

Source:

http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b78dd030-1499-11dd-a741-0000779fd2ac.dwp_uuid=70662e7c-3027-11da-ba9f-00000e2511c8.html

Clean coal technologies and Carbon capture and storage in South Africa

South Africa is looking to foster R&D partnerships with Europe in the field of clean coal technologies and carbon capture and storage in order to step up its participation in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) energy activities.

Source:

<http://cordis.europa.eu/wire/index.cfm?fuseaction=article.Detail&rcn=17298>

'No quality without equality'

'There can be no quality without equality', is one of the key messages from a recent report on the presence (or lack of it) of women in scientific decision-making bodies. Entitled 'Mapping the maze: getting more women to the top in research', the report was compiled by the European Commission's Expert Group on Women in Research Decision-Making (WIRDEM). The experts' mandate was to review the procedures for evaluating and promoting research personnel and to identify measures taken to promote women into senior positions. They were also tasked with identifying which measures had proven successful and analysing the reasons for this, and coming up with a set of recommendations to improve the situation.

Sources:

http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29348

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/>

'Ljubljana Process' and ERA

Ministers attending an informal meeting of the Competitiveness Council have launched a new process to ensure coherency and synergy between research policies and activities across the European Union. Dubbed the 'Ljubljana Process', the new partnership highlights the need for a long-term vision on the European Research Area (ERA) which is shared by all, and proposes specific management methods to enable its quick and efficient implementation. The Ministers called for a long-term vision to be agreed upon by all Member States with broad support from stakeholders and citizens. A first outline of the vision is expected to be endorsed by the Council before the end of 2008 in order to quickly focus policies and actions to make it happen. Ministers also underlined the need for better governance in order to 'steer and stimulate the development of ERA and to build links with other policies, such as education, innovation and cohesion policies.' In line with Open Method of Coordination, the ministers agreed to address specific ERA developments and long-term orientations. Their work will be guided by CREST, the EU's scientific and technical research committee.

Sources:

http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29349

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/download_docs/April/0414_COMPET/070Summary_Research.pdf

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/April/0415MVZT_COMPET.html

http://www.eu2008.si/en/Meetings_Calendar/Dates/April/0414_COMPET.html

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/ministers-see-new-vision-european-research-area/article-171660>

REACH: EU firms urged to register chemicals

The European Commission has launched an early registration campaign for REACH amid concerns that many companies are unaware of the obligations facing them under the EU's new chemicals regime. The drive applies in particular to new substances, as these will not be permitted on the market after 1 December unless they have been pre-registered. Brussels is concerned that not all firms, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) not directly involved in chemicals manufacturing or importing, understand the scope and implications of the new law, which applies to chemical substances used in a wide range of industrial process, consumer goods and beyond. ECHA is expected to publish a publicly accessible database of information about registered substances as of 1 January 2009.

Source:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/564&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/reach-eu-firms-urged-register-chemicals/article-171605>

Water scarcity concerns growing

Speedy solutions are needed to combat water shortages, according to experts and politicians who debated the issue at a conference hosted by the European Water Forum in the European Parliament on 16 April. The conference focused particularly on water scarcity in the Middle East, due to the acute shortage of water in the region. The participants agreed on key areas, notably conservation technologies and various water stress mitigation options, that should be supported in the region.

Source:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/water-scarcity-concerns-growing/article-171714>

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/transport/calls-grow-eu-suspend-biofuels-push/article-171610>

Adoption of European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

The EQF was formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 23 April 2008. At the national level, the EQF will promote the development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). The core of the EQF is its eight reference levels describing what a learner knows, understands and is able to do - their 'learning outcomes' - regardless of where a particular qualification was acquired. The EQF foresees that Member States relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010 and that their qualifications contain a reference to the EQF by 2012. It will therefore enable individuals and employers to use the EQF as a reference tool to compare the qualifications levels of different countries and different education and training systems, for example vocational training and higher education.

Source:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/265&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/631&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/education/eu-removes-barriers-qualifications-transfer/article-171898>

Initiative to facilitate mobility in vocational education and training

The European Commission has presented plans the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training system (ECVET). Member States are encouraged to sign up to this voluntary scheme that does not seek to replace national systems but to facilitate the transfer between them. This new initiative aims to build on the success of ECTS, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System in higher education. ECVET is fully compatible with both the European credit system in higher education and national systems in vocational education and training.

Source:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/558&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/education/commission-increase-mobility-learners/article-171572>



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