



Brussels News Update

April 2008

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Spring Summit

This month's issue contains extensive follow up on the spring 'summit' of the European Council, where particular attention was paid to the launch of the second cycle of the renewed Lisbon Strategy (2008-2010), climate change and energy, and the stability of financial markets.

In general the summit approved the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs and, at the same time, issued some important guidelines on the next cycle of the Lisbon Strategy. The Council formulated the "fifth freedom" – the free movement of knowledge – and stressed the importance of creativity and small and medium-sized enterprises in the further development of the European economy. Special attention was also given to the concept of (labour market) flexicurity.

EU Heads of State and Government called for 'swift progress' on the knowledge economy, asking the Member States to set out in National Reform Programmes how progress towards national R&D investment targets will be achieved and how national R&D strategies will contribute to the realisation and better governance of the European Research Area. Other key aspects of the strategy include promoting large research projects such as GALILEO, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the Joint Technology Initiatives

(JTIs), improving collaboration between industry and academia and fostering the formation of world-class innovation clusters as well as regional clusters and networks.

On funding, universities should be allowed to develop partnerships with the business community so as to benefit from complementary private sector funding. Meanwhile, an EU-wide market for venture capital for the most innovative companies must be promoted. Here the European Investment Fund must play a key role in the financing of innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Sources: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29243
http://www.eu2008.si/en/Meetings_Calendar/Dates/March/0313_EC.html
http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/March/0314ECpresidency_conclusions.pdf
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/99410.pdf
http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/March/0314EC_Lizbona.html

Link:

<http://bulletin.sciencebusiness.net/ebulletins/showissue.php3?page=/548/2802/10235>
http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/March/0314EC_Lizbona.html

Shift in the focus of Lisbon Agenda

In response to increasing public concern on climate change, ageing population and social exclusion, EU heads of state and government agreed to shift the Lisbon Agenda away from its purely "growth and jobs" focus of the past three years, and to put the environment and citizens more "in the foreground".

The European Council also called on the Commission to "present a comprehensive assessment of the future skills requirements in Europe up to 2020, taking account of the impacts of technological change and ageing populations" to better anticipate future needs of industry. Member states will aim to solve the bloc's skills shortage by tackling the reduction in the number of early school leavers and improving basic reading skills, as well as through a common EU policy on migration.

The European Council invited the European Commission and Parliament to focus on implementing ten priorities laid down in the new Community Lisbon Programme as soon as possible. The European Council further invited the European Commission and Lisbon coordinators to launch a debate at the earliest possible opportunity on the post-2010 scenario, since reforms will also be needed after this period.

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/eu-lisbon-agenda-gets-social-makeover/article-171013>

The Fifth Freedom

The "fifth freedom" - the free movement of knowledge - has been particularly highlighted as a priority to respond to the challenges of globalisation, and to transform the EU into "a truly modern and competitive economy". EU leaders agreed to step up efforts to improve working conditions for researchers, increase cross-border mobility, improve career structures and increase knowledge transfer between universities and business.

Realisation of the fifth freedom would also require: further higher education reforms; facilitating and promoting the optimal use of intellectual property created in public research organisations and encouraging open access to knowledge and innovation; launching a new generation of world-class research facilities; and promoting the mutual recognition of qualifications

Links

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/internal-market-needs-fifth-freedom/article-171128>
<http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/summit-backs-fifth-freedom-eu-scientists/article-170989>

Energy and Climate Change

In a bid to maintain a strong position in international climate change negotiations, the European Council set political guidelines for further discussion of the legislative package regarding CO₂ reduction and renewable energy. The Council has also approved a work timetable leading to its adoption aiming to produce a deal before the end of 2008 and consequently allow for their adoption within the current legislative term, at the latest early in 2009. Furthermore, the European Council reviewed the progress made in the field of further liberalisation of the internal market for electricity and gas and endorsed the European Strategic Energy Technology Plan.

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/eu-agrees-tight-schedule-climate-energy-deal/article-170999>

2009 to be European Year of Creativity and Innovation

The proposal of the European Commission to make 2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation will be examined by the European Parliament and the Council later this year. Europe is striving to become the world's leading knowledge-based economy by 2010.

It is widely agreed that to reach this target will require encouraging people to develop skills in a number of areas that are key to building a knowledge-orientated society including mathematics, science, information and other technologies. The Year will concentrate on helping people develop better skills in problem-solving and applying knowledge and ideas in real life situations. Activities focusing on social and entrepreneurial innovation will also be encouraged.

Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29289

Ban on mercury imports and exports by 2010?

The Environment Committee has agreed plans for a mercury import ban and stricter rules on storage, and voted to ban all imports and exports of mercury in the EU by 2010, instead of October 2011 proposed by the Commission. The full Parliament will adopt a final position during a plenary vote in May.

The second-reading report states that, in addition to metallic mercury, the import and export ban should also cover products containing mercury which are banned from sale or distribution within the EU as well as cinnabar ore and mercury compounds. Member States would be expected to meet their own mercury requirements from recovery from wastes and raw products.

Source: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/064-24796-085-03-13-911-20080325IPR24795-25-03-2008-2008-false/default_en.htm

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/eu-set-clash-proposed-mercury-ban/article-171210>

Disagreement over pesticide substances

The European Commission revised a proposal for a new regulation on the placing of pesticides on the market, removing most of the European Parliament's proposed cut-off criteria. The European Council will be analysing the amended proposal in the coming months but at the centre of the Commission and Parliament's disagreement is the grounds on which a substance is banned - hazard measurements or risk assessment. Parliament want to expand the list to include neuro-toxic, immuno-toxic and other high-risk substances but the Commission says it

prefers to keep substances 'of particular concern' on the market and to make them 'candidates for substitution' with less harmful ones. A second reading by the Parliament is expected after the summer.

Source:

<http://www.ecpa.eu/website/page.asp?mi=1&cust=3&lang=en&news=17374>

<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0093:FIN:EN:PDF>

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/commission-ep-odds-pesticide-substances/article-171053>

Possible VAT cuts on green goods

Heads of state and government from the EU's 27 member states agreed to consider a Franco-British proposal to cut value-added tax (VAT) on certain environmentally-friendly goods, such as energy efficient light bulbs and insulation materials. The Commission has been invited to "examine areas where economic instruments, including VAT rates, can have a role to play to increase the use of energy-efficient goods and energy-saving materials". The Commission will present its new legislative proposals on VAT rates this summer.

Source:

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/March/0314ECpresidency_conclusions.pdf

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/eu-consider-vat-cuts-green-goods/article-171000>

European Business and Technology Centre In New Delhi, India

The European Commission is inviting proposals for the establishment of a European Business and Technology Centre in New Delhi, India. The Commission has made 6.6 million euro available, representing up to 80 per cent of the cost.

The new Centre is to improve links between European and Indian businesses and with Science and Technology (ST) stakeholders involving business, industry and public bodies essentially with a view to promote EU interests in India and tap the fast-growing Indian economy. The centre will build synergies among the national chambers of commerce of EU Member States established in India; collaborate with the European business associations in India and Europe; provide an interface between public policy makers and private actors; raise awareness about existing European programmes in the field of science and technology and business and industry cooperation.

The Centre is expected to target the following sectors: Environment (such as clean development mechanism, chemicals management, water management and waste management); Climate change including mitigation and adaptation technologies; Transport; Energy (renewable energy, energy efficiency, clean coal, and carbon capture and storage technologies) and Biotech; sectors where the EU business operators experience non-tariff barriers and market access constraints.

Source:

<http://cordis.europa.eu/wire/index.cfm?fuseaction=article.Detail&rcn=17199>

Joint action to monitor impact of climate change in ACP countries

Two European bodies, EUMETSAT and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), have come together and signed a collaboration agreement to tackle the potential environmental challenges that developing countries are likely to face as a result of climate change. The agreement will also support the Implementation Plan of the Global Climate Observing System, an international institution charged with providing the necessary observations for monitoring the climate.

Link:

http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29279

A landmark in ERA: Trans-Domain Proposals

Trans-Domain Proposals (TDPs), operating within COST, offer researchers ground for future networks across many scientific disciplines, by allowing unusually broad, interdisciplinary proposals to strike across the nine scientific domains currently offered.

A Standing Assessment Body (SAB) will review submitted TDPs. The SAB will be composed of the Chairs of the nine COST Domain Committees, as well as two additional scientific experts per Domain, and will be led by a neutral coordinator directly appointed by the President of the COST Committee of Senior Officials. The COST Office's own Science Officers may also serve as experts with the SAB.

Chemistry and Molecular Sciences and Technologies – CMST is one of the nine scientific COST Domains.

Source:

<http://cordis.europa.eu/wire/index.cfm?fuseaction=article.Detail&rcn=17152>

Mix and Match: new EU guide to research funding

The European Commission is developing a guide to help researchers select the right programme for their activities and even combine funds from different sources. A draft version of the guide is now ready and the Commission is keen to receive feedback on the document from the research community. At the heart of the guide is a six-point checklist designed to help researchers identify the most relevant funding source for their needs. The guide explains how funds from different sources can be combined to best effect, without falling foul of co-financing rules and a series of examples illustrates how different organisations might draw on different funds for different activities or phases of their projects. Once finalised, the online version of the guide will be updated regularly and will also include links to the relevant national and regional programmes.

The Commission asks for comments and suggestions by the end of April on how the guide can be made more practical and user-friendly.

Source:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=FP7_NEWS&ACTION=D&RCN=29273

Research infrastructures: from ideas to practice

In a newly published report entitled 'Developing world-class research infrastructures for the European Research Area (ERA)', the European Research Area (ERA) Expert Group has identified the need to improve the efficiency of funding and increase funding levels for existing and future research infrastructures in Europe and they call for Member States to coordinate their infrastructure priorities with those outlined in the European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures. The report also makes the recommendation that an appropriate forum should

be identified or created where global research infrastructures can be discussed and where 'Europe should speak with one voice'.

Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29234

Over €21 million for Science in society

Projects promoting the role of science in society get part of the €80m allocated for new projects that address research and policy actions on science, economy and society.

The Science in Society programme will fund 28 projects for a total budget of over €21 million.

Details of all projects will be available on CORDIS <http://cordis.europa.eu/en/home.html>

Source:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/4&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

MEPs vote on scientific data on climate change

The European Parliament's Temporary Committee on Climate Change (CLIM) adopted its interim report examining the scientific data on climate change in April. The report, to be put to a plenary vote Strasbourg in May, criticised current mitigation efforts as being 'insufficient to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions over the next decades'. The committee agrees that scientific evidence clearly shows that the underlying cause of global warming is man-made, recognising however that scientific progress has always been marked by uncertainties. The report calls for 'additional research into the impact of the policy promoting biofuels and their effects on the increase of deforestation, the expansion of cultivated land and world food supplies.

The final paper will include recommendations on future EU climate change policy, on adaptation and mitigation measures and the Parliament's position in international negotiations for a post-2012 climate change framework.

Source:

http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29294

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/meps-highlight-citizens-role-climate-change/article-171307>

Chemical classification

The Parliament's Environment Committee has approved of a new law harmonising EU chemical classification practices with international standards. The draft law, which will revise EU rules on the classification, labelling and packing (CLP) of dangerous chemicals, was approved by the committee with only minor changes. The law must still be approved by Parliament's full assembly and by member states before coming into force.

Source:

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

GEEREF: a new EU global green energy fund

During March, Parliament approved a fund of more than €100 million to flow into a new Global Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Fund (GEEREF). The Commission hopes that the fund will generate up to €1 billion in risk capital for 'green' energy projects in developing states.

The fund aims to mobilise public and private financing for pilot projects in renewable energy and clean technology projects, particularly in developing states.

The EU will contribute €80 million to the fund by 2010, with a €15 million 'kick-start' contribution scheduled for 2008. Lending institutions like the World Bank and the European Investment Bank (EIB) will also contribute to the fund, with €100 million in total initial funding from commercial and public sources expected.

Source:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/1329&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/eu-global-green-energy-fund-endorsed-parliament/article-170975>

EU and biofuels

A special biofuel working group has produced a draft directive calling for stricter "sustainability criteria" for biofuels to counter growing concerns about the risks related to their mass production, including deforestation, hikes in food prices and water shortages. The draft finds the Commission proposal too weak. The proposal currently requires all biofuels used in Europe to deliver life-cycle CO₂ savings (i.e. during production, transport and use) of 35% compared to conventional fuels. The final report will be presented to national experts in April.

The European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mariann Fischer Boel, reaffirming the European Union's dedication to biofuels at the Biofuels Markets Congress in Brussels in March, also stressed the importance of sustainability in biofuels production.

Source:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/99410.pdf
http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29238

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/transport/eu-signals-possible-retreat-biofuels/article-170991>
<http://www.euractiv.com/en/transport/eu-members-set-demand-tougher-biofuel-standards/article-171249>

Green light to EIT

The European Parliament adopted the Regulation establishing the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). The EIT will operate on the basis of highly integrated partnerships known as "Knowledge and Innovation Communities", (KICs). These KICs will pool together a critical mass of the best resources from higher education institutions, research organisations, businesses and other stakeholders in the innovation process. They will be selected and coordinated by an independent Governing Board, composed of 18 renowned personalities from business, research and academia. The focus will be on strategic areas where the EU faces vital current and future challenges. These are likely to include climate change, renewable energies and the next generation of information and communication technologies.

It is estimated that the institute will need an overall budget of €2.4 billion for the first six years, to come from a combination of private and public sources. A total of €308.7 million will come from the Community budget. Although the location of the EIT's future headquarters is still to be decided, it is hoped that the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) will open for business by the summer.

Source:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/414&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>
http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29228

Link:

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/eu-technology-institute-start-operations-2010/article-170890>

Warning over EU's ageing science workforce

The Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) has called for more awareness of the ageing of the scientific workforce in Europe. Their recently published figures show that since 2001, the percentage of senior science workers aged between 45 and 64 in the total working population has increased every year by 3.3% on average. Ageing populations in the science and technology professions are putting the EU's innovation potential at risk, according to the Eurostat. In terms of human resources, it is estimated that an extra half a million researchers (or 1.2 million research-based staff) are needed to meet the Lisbon goals of innovation and competitiveness

Source:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-026/EN/KS-SF-08-026-EN.PDF

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=29268

Link:

http://news.euractiv.com/Go/index.cfm?WL=69231&WS=99007_2219335&WA=6543

Unchanged R&D spending

Research and development (R&D) spending in Europe has remained unchanged at 1.84% of GDP for the last three years, according to the latest figures released from Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities. Although some Member States (Sweden and Finland) have shown that it is possible to achieve the target, these figures are cause for concern given that the European Union has set itself the target of investing 3% of GDP in research by 2010.

Statistics are also provided on the R&D labour force, which stood at 4.8% of the total labour force in 2006. The countries employing the highest shares of scientists and engineers were Belgium with 7.9%, Ireland with 6.8% and Finland and Sweden with 6.7% and 6.5% respectively.

Link: http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29223



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

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