



Brussels News Update

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EU Presidency: Priorities for Research

Slovenia has taken up the EU Presidency for the first six months of 2008 and has an agenda strong focus on research.

The presidency's priority issues are:

- investigating ways to encourage companies to cooperate in their research and development (R&D) activities with 'knowledge institutions'.
- stimulating those companies that develop products and services of high technological complexity to embrace new products or technologies.
- strengthening the ERA, focusing in particular on industrial research including Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).
- increasing the transition of highly educated personnel between the private and public sectors,
- supporting European Technology Platforms in the implementation of their SRAs.

Other concerns include ensuring the more effective involvement of the Western Balkans in EU activities, boosting the number of women working in science, and developing research infrastructures, particularly at a regional level. A conference on this topic will take place in March.

Source

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=1&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1200578732079&RCN=28957

Links

http://cordis.europa.eu/slovenia/presidency/home_en.html

http://www.eu2008.si/en/Policy_Areas/Competitiveness/Research.html

Future of Research Funding

Speaking at a meeting of the Science Policy Bridge in Brussels, Zoran Stančič, Deputy Director General of DG Research, argued that there would be a strong case for research funding to continue to take a greater share of EU funding in the future.

The current budget for FP7 is €54bn, plus the contributions of associated countries. Annual spending increases will start off small in the early years but accelerate in the second half of the period up to 2013.

During 2008, the European Commission will prepare a review of the entire EU budget. While the future of the Common Agriculture Policy and the UK rebate will grab the headlines, other budget holders will be seeking to position themselves for increases, especially from 2014 onwards.

DG Research is already preparing its case. Evidence will come from the evaluation of FP6 being carried out this year as well as early indications from the implementation of the current programme.

Trends in the development of the EU budget are positive for research, with funding for competitiveness and external actions, including research, rising from around 8% of the budget in the 1980s to 26% by 2013. By contrast, CAP expenditure will decline to 32% in 2013, from approximately 70% in 1985. Moreover, recent policy debates have centred on research and innovation as the key driver of European competitiveness and a number of new priorities demonstrate this e.g. the Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan.

Finally, DG Research is one of the most efficient and effective of the Commission services in spending its budget, with 99.7% of its 2007 allocation spent by the end of December.

However, it is very unlikely that the mid-term budget review will result in radical changes in funding. While some rebalancing of priorities could take place, the key battle will be about positioning for much bigger changes in 2014.

New Executive Agencies to Manage Research

Two new agencies to manage projects funded under the EU's research framework programmes were created on 14 December.

The European Research Council Executive Agency will help to manage the projects funded by the European Research Council (ERC), established under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). It will be responsible for around €7 billion over the course of FP7 (2007 to 2013) and will replace the Dedicated Implementation Structure which is managed directly by DG Research. The Director should be appointed by June and the agency should then become operational by December 2008.

The agency will have around 350 staff of which around 20% will be temporary agents. These will be used to fill higher level posts requiring scientific or managerial expertise and would allow the recruitment of scientists for defined time periods who would then return to academic life.

There has been much concern among the scientific community that an executive agency solution would not provide for sufficient autonomy for the ERC. The current Director of the DIS Jack Metthey argues that the agency solution provides an appropriate response to the question of scientific autonomy and that there are a number of advantages to this solution in that it:

- is a well-defined and tested regulatory environment
- can deliver a fully operational ERC in a shorter time frame than the alternatives proposed
- provides for efficient operations
- is cost effective (the agency will mean that only 3.5% of the total ERC budget will be spent on administration – compared to a ceiling provided in FP7 of 5% - and that this means more money for researcher grants
- provides accountability. There will be an annual report and the Director will answer be required to attend Parliament to answer questions on this

The 2010 Review

As part of the compromise eventually agreed on FP7, a review of the structures and mechanisms of the ERC was agreed. This will take place in 2010 but preparations are already under way. A Commission Communication is expected in mid 2008. This will set the terms of reference and the methodology for the review. Prof. Kafatos, speaking in the European Parliament in November 2007, emphasised that he will not personally decide how to approach the review until it is due. He said that the current ERC board, consisting of the chair and two vice chairs of the Scientific Council, as well as the Secretary General and the Director of the DIS currently works very well, and the only priority is how the ERC can help make Europe a leader in world science.

The second body, the Research Executive Agency, will administer the Marie Curie fellowship schemes, research programmes designed for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and parts of the space and security research themes. The arrangement is particularly suited to these areas of FP7 as they involve large numbers of relatively small grants, and are unlikely to involve much policy input. The agency will manage funding of €6.5 billion.

Both agencies will be based in Brussels.

Source

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=17&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1200607701383&RCN=28853

Links

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/rea>

[Http://erc.europa.eu](http://erc.europa.eu)

ERC Scientific Council Guidelines for Open Access

The Scientific Council has published guidelines for open access to information, including scientific publications and original data.

The guidelines emphasise that peer-review is of fundamental importance and that policies towards access to peer reviewed scientific publications must guarantee the ability of the system to continue to deliver high-quality certification services based on scientific integrity.

For the moment the guidelines require that all peer-reviewed publications from ERC-funded research projects be deposited on publication into an appropriate research repository where available, or an institutional repository, and subsequently made Open Access within 6

months of publication. Primary data are to be deposited to the relevant databases as soon as possible, preferably immediately after publication and in any case not later than 6 months after the date of publication.

The Scientific Council statement of 17 December 2007 also sets out a clear intention to issue specific guidelines for the mandatory deposit in open access repositories of research results – that is, publications, data and primary materials – obtained thanks to ERC grants, as soon as pertinent repositories become operational.

The ERC Scientific Council also hopes that research funders across Europe will join forces in establishing common open-access rules and in building European open access repositories that will help make these rules operational. To facilitate this process for EU-funded research, it recommends that the European Commission sets up a task force to develop an operational FP7 policy on open access by the end of 2007.

Source

http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/ScC_Guidelines_Open_Access_revised_Dec07_FINAL.pdf

European Research Council awards first grants

The European Research Council has announced the outcome of its first competition for Starting Independent Investigators. About 300 up-and-coming research leaders, between two and nine years after their doctorate, will receive grants. The first Starting Grants will be signed in February next year. The successful candidates represent over 30 nationalities and are based in some 170 host institutions in 21 different countries.

ERC Starting Grants are designed to boost the careers of researchers, who may be working in any area of science or scholarship, at the time they are establishing themselves as independent research leaders. Over 9000 applications were submitted by the deadline of 25 April 2007. Of the 559 successful candidates at the first stage, 554 investigators of 38 nationalities in 21 countries submitted full proposals, of which 431 passed the quality thresholds for excellence.

The average age of successful grantees is 35 and 26% are women. The first grants will be signed in February 2008.

The ERC Scientific Council will evaluate the process and the outcome in order to fine-tune the grant scheme for the next Starting Grant call, which will be published by the summer of 2008.

Source

http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/press_release-14122007_en.pdf

Link

ERC Memo on statistics: <http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/memo.pdf>

Lead Market Initiative to Unlock Innovative Markets

The European Commission is proposing to unlock market potential for innovative goods and services by lifting obstacles hindering innovation in a first batch of six important markets: eHealth, protective textiles, sustainable construction, recycling, bio-based products and renewable energies. These markets with high economic and societal value represent an annual turnover of more than € 120 billion and 1.9 million jobs in the EU.

The "Lead Markets Initiative for Europe" (LMI) proposed by the Commission will foster the emergence of these markets by notably improving legislation, encouraging public procurement and clarifying state aids concerns, and developing interoperable standards. European enterprises would profit from fair and better chances of entering new fast growing world-wide markets with a competitive advantage as lead producers. LMI would also rapidly bring visible advantage for Europe's consumers in key domains for their welfare.

The LMI initiative calls for the urgent coordination of policies through ambitious action plans targeting these markets. The six first ones are:

- Renewable energy
- Sustainable construction
- Innovative use of bio-based products
- eHealth
- Technical textiles for intelligent personal protective clothing and equipment (PPE)
- Recycling

Source

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/12&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Links

DG Enterprise: <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/leadmarket/leadmarket.htm>

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/areas-selected-lead-market-initiative/article-169404>

Commission proposal to limit CO₂ from Cars

The European Commission has proposed legislation to reduce the average CO₂ emissions of new passenger cars to 120 grams per kilometre by 2012. The proposed legislation is the cornerstone of the EU's strategy to improve the fuel economy of cars, which account for about 12% of the European Union's carbon emissions.

President of the Commission José Manuel Barroso stated: "This proposal demonstrates that the European Union is committed to being a world leader in cutting CO₂ emissions and the development of a low carbon economy. At the same time, we are committed to promote the competitiveness of our industry and its global technological leadership."

The proposal will reduce the average emissions of CO₂ from new passenger cars in the EU from around 160 grams per kilometre to 130 grams per kilometre in 2012 as part of the EU's integrated approach to achieve overall 120 grams per kilometre. That will translate into a 19% reduction of CO₂ emissions.

The new legislation would replace a 1998 voluntary agreement signed with the EU's Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA), which committed carmakers to achieving a target – now extremely likely to be missed – of 140g/km by 2008.

The Commission has faced heavy opposition from car makers and some member states, notably Germany. As a concession the average 130g/km target for car CO₂ emissions will be implemented by setting laxer limits for heavier vehicles, such as SUVs and luxury models. However, the commission still proposes substantial fines for manufacturers not meeting the targets

As well as achieving environmental results, the proposal is also intended to benefit consumers through important fuel savings, improve energy security and promote eco-innovations and high-quality jobs in the EU.

The proposal will now be sent to the Council and to the European Parliament.

Source

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1965&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Links

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

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/transport/commission-plans-co2-fines-carmakers/article-169288>

Commission Takes Steps to Cut Industrial Emissions Further

The European Commission has proposed new legislation on industrial emissions to strengthen the provisions already in force and reduce industrial emissions throughout the European Union in a move which merges seven directives into one.

The aim of the new directive is to tackle the shortcomings of current legislation on industrial emissions. There are seven overlapping directives covering similar activities with approximately 52,000 installations falling under the scope of the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive alone. The main thrust of the directive is to increase the use of "best available techniques" (BATs), an obligation to ensure that industrial operators use the most cost-effective techniques to achieve a high level of environmental protection.

The new directive merges the current IPPC Directive and six sectoral directives into a single new industrial emissions directive. It also extends the scope of legislation to cover other activities, such as medium sized combustion plants. This element of the proposal has been particularly criticised by businesses, who say this will lead to the closure of power stations and other plants, and is likely to remain a focus of debate as the proposal passes through the legislative process.

Source

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1985&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Links

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/business-criticises-green-industry-plans/article-169409>

<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ippc/index.htm>

Ministers Want Progress on Human Biomonitoring

EU environment ministers have asked the Commission to press ahead with an EU pilot project on human biomonitoring (HBM) to measure pollutants in human tissue and fluid. The project is expected to provide evidence to support both environmental and public health policy and help policymakers to identify priorities.

The ministers also invited the Commission to support the development of a database on environment-related health problems to enable better understanding of "multi-cause environment and health relationships".

More generally, the EU executive was told to increase funding for research, demonstration and awareness programmes aimed at providing more effective prevention and responses to hazards and science-based decision-making.

Source

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/ministers-press-quick-progress-human-biomonitoring/article-169308>

Links

Council: [Conclusions on Environment and Health](#)   | [FR](#)   (20 Dec. 2007)

European project: [European Human Biomonitoring Homepage](#) 

Development of Novel Foods

GMOs are back in the political spotlight in Brussels following a Commission proposal to speed up the market authorisation for 'novel' foods including meat from cloned animals.

The aim of the proposal is to provide for "for safe and innovative foods to reach the EU market faster" especially through the creation of a simpler and quicker centralised authorisation system.

The proposal covers "foods derived from plants and animals, produced by non-traditional breeding techniques, and foods modified by new production processes, such as nanotechnology"

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) draft scientific opinion published on 11 January 2008 states that "it is very unlikely that any difference exists in terms of food safety between food products from clones and their progeny compared with conventionally-bred animals." ESFA will issue a final opinion in May.

Source

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/food/commission-encourages-development-innovative-foods/article-169539>



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