



European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences
Avenue E. van Nieuwenhuysse 4
B-1160 Brussels, Belgium
secretariat@euchems.org
www.euchems.org

Brussels News Update

March 2009

- **Report finds EU spending on R&D slips further against USA**
- **Energy security agenda approved by ministers**
- **Review of the European Research Council launched by the Commission**
- **Polish companies seek funding for first combined zero-emission power and chemical plant**
- **European Retailers' Forum launched as part of Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan**
- **Report highlights deep divisions over nanotechnology regulation**
- **Right to refuse GM crop cultivation backed by environment ministers**
- **Talks on community patent to be intensified as Competitiveness Council backs Czech priorities**
- **Parliament approves proposals which broaden the scope of the eco-design product list**
- **Uncertainty over risks of nanotechnologies in food**
- **Registration for Helsinki Chemicals Forum now open**
- **Sustainable Development – a Challenge for European Research – Conference Registration now open**
- **World Biofuels Market in Brussels, 16th – 18th March**
- **5th World Water Forum in Istanbul, 16th – 22nd March**

Report finds EU spending on R&D slips further against USA

A new study revealed that the EU's spending on R&D is likely to fall short of the Lisbon Strategy goal of 3% of GDP by 2010 – and that the EU is likely to fall yet further behind the USA if R&D spending on services does not increase. According to the study's author, European Investment Bank economist Kristian Uppenberg, the overall gap between the EU and USA in R&D spending is likely to widen rather than narrow if spending on research into services does not increase as the share of services in total value added grows. The important potential role of large companies and innovation clusters were also highlighted in the report, with the spill-over effects these bring often representing a better return on investment for research funding. This comes in addition to the report's findings that R&D spending by SMEs is, relatively, small. In light of this, Uppenberg recommends that market-driven innovation forces be born in mind when designing public policy. The news comes after the announcement in January that the EU will have to earmark a larger proportion of its funds for innovation if is going to secure new investment from industry.

Links: www.euractive.com/1 www.ceps.eu/ www.euractiv.com/2

Energy security agenda approved by ministers

European energy ministers have broadly confirmed the European Commission's draft energy security roadmap, endorsing six priority infrastructure projects, efficiency measures and "indigenous" sources of energy, such as renewables and nuclear, to secure more reliable supplies for the future. The Energy Council largely endorsed the Commission's proposed Second Strategic Energy Review, reaffirming their support for six infrastructure projects to improve gas and electricity interconnections and promote large-scale offshore wind. Renewable energies, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and nuclear power, together with an external energy policy, were highlighted as central to ensuring energy security. Disagreement remains, however, over the financing of the measures. The Commission is to prepare a Sustainable Energy Financing Initiative in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) to "mobilise large-scale funding from capital markets for investments" in energy efficiency measures and clean energies. This comes following changes in the resources available for coal-based energy production with the downgrading of the support foreseen for CCS projects from €250 to €200 million. Funding for energy-efficiency and bioenergy were, in ministers' estimations, notable in their absence.

Links: www.eu2009.cz/1^ www.consilium.europa.eu/

Review of the European Research Council launched by the Commission

A high-level panel of experts is to review the work of the European Research Council, looking into the progress made by the ERC since its inception and drawing up advice on its future direction. The panel of six EU and US experts will meet between February and July 2009 before submitting its report to the European Commission in autumn. All members of the panel have all held senior

positions in national government, research institutes or European academic establishments, and are chaired by Vaira Vike-Freiberga, a former president of Latvia and a former professor of psychology at the University of Montreal. The EU Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potočnik, who announced the review, welcomed it as a “robust and authoritative analysis of the ERC”.

Links: <http://europa.eu/1> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/>

Polish companies seek funding for first combined zero-emission power and chemical plant

A joint project proposed by two leading Polish industrial companies would see the building of a coal-to-synthetic-gas plant for electricity and heat generation, or chemicals manufacture, with integrated carbon capture and storage in Upper Silesia. The proposal is seeking funding as one of the 10 - 12 EU-funded CCS demonstration plants, with plans to implement some 20 different technologies offering an opportunity to test these for application – as well as offering a 92% cut in CO₂ emissions. It is hoped that partnerships with other companies, together with financial support at national and EU level, will enable the project to be up and running by 2015 as stipulated under EU objectives.

Links: www.zero-emissionplatform.eu/ www.euractiv.com/3

European Retailers' Forum launched as part of Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan

European retailers have launched a forum to promote the sector's environmental sustainability and to help consumers to buy green. EuroCommerce and the European Retail Roundtable, which represent the European retail sector, have launched the Retail Forum and "counter proposal" to the EU executive's Communication on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). A Retailers' Environmental Action Plan (REAP) sees individual forum members agree to take forward the SCP Action Plan by voluntarily reducing the environmental footprint of the retail sector and its supply chain, promoting more sustainable products and better communicating to consumers. EU Consumer Protection Commissioner Meglena Kuneva welcomed the initiative, arguing that "retailers are in a unique position" to help consumers make sustainable choices and buy green. "Product information must be clear, and sustainable products must not be a luxury," she added. The move follows a presentation by the food industry of an initiative to decrease the carbon footprint of products.

Links: <http://europa.eu/2> www.eurocommerce.be/

Report highlights deep divisions over nanotechnology regulation

A new study has revealed deep divisions on how nanotechnology should be regulated. Environmental lobby groups are seeking a moratorium until products are proven to be safe, while industry is proposing that specific guidelines be introduced to supplement existing regulations. As experts gathered for a stakeholder dialogue in Brussels, preliminary results of an ongoing survey revealed that more than half the respondents to date have suggested that regulation on the use of nanomaterials in the production of chemicals and food is inadequate. This contrasted with somewhat less concern about cosmetics, medical products and environmental protection, with still fewer respondents voicing fears over medical devices and occupational health.

Links: www.framingnano.eu/ www.euractiv.com/4

Right to refuse GM crop cultivation backed by environment ministers

European Environment Ministers found the necessary qualified majority to reject a Commission proposal which would have forced member states to allow the cultivation of GM crops, thus overturning bans in place in Austria and Hungary, France and Greece. The Council vote was called after the Commission's GMO expert committee failed to reach an agreement on lifting the national bans. The genetically modified maize developed by Monsanto and the object of the national bans, has been approved by the European Food Safety Authority for use in the EU.

Links: <http://ec.europa.eu/>

Talks on community patent to be intensified as Competitiveness Council backs Czech priorities

The Czech Deputy Prime Minister, Alexandr Vondra, has called on the EU to prioritise negotiations on a community patent and to find ways to achieve savings in translation and procedural requirements. Describing the current system as "fragmented and inefficient", he stressed that Europe's intellectual property infrastructure was stifling innovation – innovation strongly driven by SMEs and vital to Europe's economy. Picking up the issue – one of the Czech presidency's priorities – at its meeting in Brussels, the Competitiveness Council pledged to intensify work on creating a community patent and a patent litigation system. Additional proposals by Vondra, including the further development of the ERA, overcoming Europe's fragmentation in research by better linking its researchers, and enhancing cooperation between smaller member states in developing research infrastructure, also received the backing of the Competitiveness Council.

Links: www.eu2009.cz/2 www.eu2009.cz/3

Parliament approves proposals which broaden the scope of the eco-design product list

Proposals put forward by the European Commission to extend the scope of the Eco-design Directive and the Ecolabel have been backed by the European Parliament, but proposals to include food products in the plans were rejected. The decision means that now all products with an impact on energy are covered, whereas previously it had only been applicable for devices which directly use energy. Though the measures fall short of the proposal which would have covered all products except means of transport, it requires that the Commission come up with a suggestion by 2012 for extending the scope of the scheme to "non-energy-related products" with "significant potential for reducing their environmental impacts throughout their whole life-cycle". MEPs also agreed to making the Ecolabel scheme less bureaucratic and less expensive, thus enabling greater access for SMEs to the label and ensuring proper funding for awareness raising campaigns. The Parliament also urged the Commission to consider the inclusion of reduced animal testing and better environmental performance as criteria for awarding the label. The Environment Committee also backed the Commission's proposals to phase-out incandescent light bulbs.

Links: www.europarl.europa.eu/1

www.europarl.europa.eu/2

Uncertainty over risks of nanotechnologies in food

Risk assessment of some nano products is being hampered by uncertainties in detecting and measuring levels of nanomaterials, according to a new opinion report published by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Limited knowledge of current usage levels and likely exposure products in the food area have prompted the agency to call for a case-by-case approach when determining the risks associated with engineered nanomaterials (ENMs). EFSA's scientific committee concluded that established international approaches to risk assessment can also be applied to engineered nanomaterials, but says a lack of validated test methodologies could make risk assessment of specific nanoproducts "very difficult and subject to a high degree of uncertainty". The EFSA recommends that additional research and investigation are needed to address the many current uncertainties and data limitations. Prof Vittorio Silano, chair of EFSA's scientific committee, said the issue is a priority for the authority, announcing that an expert group will be established to monitor emerging scientific data.

Links: www.efsa.europa.eu/

Registration now open for Helsinki Chemicals Forum

The first Helsinki Chemicals Forum, taking place on the 27th – 29th of May, invites academic researchers, politicians, non-governmental bodies, human interest groups and industry to take part in an open dialogue with true impact. The Forum will explore the role that Chemistry can play

in finding and contributing to sustainable solutions for environmental problems and consumer concerns. Commissioner for the Environment, Stavros Dimas, has confirmed his attendance.

Links: <http://finnexpo.multiedition.fi/>

Sustainable Development – a Challenge for European Research – Conference Registration now open

Registration has opened for the conference "Sustainable development: a challenge for European research". Organised by DG Research, in cooperation with the Czech Presidency of the EU, it aims to initiate a structured dialogue on how to reform European research to best respond to sustainable development challenges, many of which are of international scope. It will also investigate ways for improving the science-policy link and the relationship between science and society. EuChems will be represented at the event.

Links: http://ec.europa.eu/research/sd/conference/2009/index_en.cfm

World Biofuels Market in Brussels, 16th – 18th March

The World Biofuels Market will be held at the Brussels Expo from the 16th to the 18th of March 2009. The international conference and exhibition brings together industry representatives for a variety of information, networking and debate events. The winners of the first Sustainable Biofuels Awards will also be announced at the event.

Links: www.worldbiofuelsmarkets.com

5th World Water Forum in Istanbul, 16th – 22nd March

The fifth World Water Forum will meet in Istanbul between the 16th and 22nd of March. This focal event for the water community will bring together actors and decision makers from the fields of research, policy and industry to discuss and seek solutions to some of the most pressing challenges in the field of water.

Links: www.worldwaterforum5.org



Produced for EuCheMS by IFOK GmbH

© EuCheMS 2008 AISBL - Registered office Avenue E. Van Nieuwenhuysse 4, B-1160 Brussels

Any advice given by EuCheMS has been carefully formulated but is necessarily based on the information available, and EuCheMS cannot be held responsible for accuracy or completeness. In this respect, EuCheMS owes no duty of care and shall not be liable for any resulting damage or loss. EuCheMS acknowledges that a disclaimer cannot restrict liability at law for personal injury or death arising through a finding of negligence.