

News on EU Research Policy and Programmes

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EU POLICY	2
A Constitution for Europe	2
Streamlined EU Legislation	2
EC Changes at the Top	3
Developments on Community Patent	3
Opposition to Lifting Ban on GMOs	3
Amendments to White Paper on Transport	4
New Charter on Sustainable Development	4
The Daphne II Programme	5
Centre for Cyber Security	5
RESEARCH NEWS.....	6
ERC Debate.....	6
Debate on European Universities	6
New Head of Busquin's Cabinet	7
Biotechnology for the Rich.....	7
Milk Regulation Gene.....	8
Penguins Destroy Stomach Bacteria to Feed Chicks	8
Rehabilitation of Prisoners through On-line Services	8
eGovernment Study.....	9
Studying Nuclear Waste Management.....	9
EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CULTURE	10
Network of eLearning Cities.....	10
Action Plan on Linguistic Diversity.....	10
Cross-Channel University	10
EXTERNAL COLLABORATION	11
China and US Commit to ITER.....	11
EU/US Joint Research Initiatives.....	11
ESA and Russia Sign Space Agreement	12
EVENTS and AWARDS.....	12
Intellectual Property Marketing Workshop.....	12
Nobel Day	12
Forum on Venture Capital.....	13
EUREKA Meets Asia	13
EURESCO Conference on Bionanotechnology	13
Managing the Marine Environment.....	14
Descartes Prize 2003.....	14
NEW PUBLICATIONS and ON-LINE RESOURCES.....	14
European SMEs Reports	14
SMEs in Europe	15
eEurope 2002 Action Plan.....	15
Academy of Finland Newsletter.....	15
Assistance for Participants in FP6.....	16
eLearning Portal.....	16
CORDIS	16

EUR-LEX (Official Journal C and L)	16
EUROPA.....	17
RAPID	17
GLOSSARY	17

EU POLICY

A Constitution for Europe

EC President Romano Prodi has launched an Internet debate on a potential Constitution for Europe. Based on the working document 'Penelope', that seeks to give a general idea of the possible content of a future Constitution of the EU, members of the public now have the opportunity to voice their opinions on issues such as democracy, justice, and monetary policy. The President himself and the experts involved in drawing up the document are taking part in the on-line discussion by responding to comments and proposals from the public.

The basic idea behind 'Penelope' was to provide an illustration of how a Constitution of the EU would look. The document was produced by a working party of experts, its structure following the outline presented by the President of the Convention, Valery Giscard d'Estaing. The on-line debate forms part of 'The Debate on the Future of the EU', an initiative launched at the Nice Intergovernmental Conference in December 2000. This in turn forms part of an ongoing process of discussion and exchange of ideas which will contribute to the preparation of a further intergovernmental conference planned for 2004.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The document is available at:

<http://europa.eu.int/prodi>

Information is also available on the inter-institutional portal 'Futurum' at:

<http://europa.eu.int/futurum/>

Streamlined EU Legislation

The EC has adopted a Communication setting out an ambitious and detailed 'Framework for Action' to simplify, streamline and improve access to the body of EU law, known as the 'acquis communautaire'. This is the latest stage in the EC's 'Better Regulation' initiative, a key part of the objective set at the Lisbon summit in 2000 of making the EU the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010.

The initiative aims to establish a reliable, up-to-date and user-friendly body of EU law for the benefit of citizens, workers and businesses across Europe. As a first contribution, the EC now proposes immediate removal of obsolete legislation amounting to over 1,000 pages of the Official Journal. Through a concerted programme of consolidation and codification, it is estimated that the volume of legislation could be reduced by as much as 35,000 pages by 2005. At the end of 2002, the body of binding secondary legislation adopted by the European institutions amounted to 97,000 pages of the Official Journal. The EC now looks to the EP and the March European Council to endorse its approach.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release IP/03/214 of 11/02/03, available from:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/questen.ksh>

The EC has launched a public consultation on the Communication at:

http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm

EC Changes at the Top

The EC has made a number of decisions concerning senior personnel.

Jonathan Faull is appointed Director-General for Justice and Home Affairs, replacing Adrian Fortescue, who becomes Adviser 'Hors Classe'. Reijo Kemppinen becomes EC spokesman. Guy Crauser, currently Director General for Regional Policy, becomes Adviser 'Hors Classe'. The posts of Directors-General of DG Press and Communication and DG Regional Policy are published for internal applications. Finally, Michael Leigh is appointed Deputy Director-General for External Relations.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/index_en.htm

Developments on Community Patent

Dimitris Deniozos, Greek General Secretary for Research and Development, has said that there should be a political agreement on the Community patent by May. This is due to a new compromise by the Greek Presidency of the EU, concerning provision for a single judicial system.

There are two opposing positions concerning the EC's proposal on a judicial system. Some Member States are in favour of having a single court to hear patent cases; however, others would prefer to see regional chambers established in order to do this. The framework drawn up by the Greek Presidency would result in one court, based in Luxembourg, being established for the purpose of ensuring uniformity in case law. In addition, any Member State wishing to set up a decentralised chamber to ensure regional representation would be able to do, although they would need to finance the operational cost themselves. The Presidency has also proposed that judges could be mobile, thus being able to operate in individual countries whilst still being part of a central judicial system. The position of the European Patent Office (EPO) in respect to the Community patent was also mentioned: patents should be able to be filed within any individual country or, alternatively, through the EPO.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.cordis.lu/greece>

Opposition to Lifting Ban on GMOs

Following calls from EU Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner David Byrne to lift the five year de facto moratorium on the authorisation of new genetically modified organisms (GMOs), agriculture ministers from Germany, France, Greece, Belgium, Luxembourg and Austria have restated their position that until new laws are in place, no new authorisations should be granted.

Commissioner Byrne argued that even though the new rules have yet to become law new authorisation procedures could begin, since measures governing the labelling and traceability of GMOs have been agreed. However, given that the new rules have yet to be approved by the EP, opponents of GMOs could still vote to block the measures. Germany's Agriculture Minister, Renate Künast, stated that Germany starts from the principle that the moratorium will only be lifted once the rules on the origin and labelling have come into force'.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

CORDIS Press Release 19771 of 24/02/03, available from:

<http://dbs.cordis.lu/news/en/home.html>

Amendments to White Paper on Transport

In February the EP adopted a report calling for significant changes to the EC's 2001 White Paper on Transport. The 2001 White Paper proposed some sixty measures to refocus its policy in the area, aiming at making European transport more sustainable and avoiding economic losses due to congestion, pollution and accidents. The EP generally supports the measures proposed by the EC, but believes that they do not go far enough towards achieving the objectives.

The amendments adopted by the EP include:

- the setting up of a European road safety agency, and the adoption by the EC of the third Road Safety Action Programme 2002 – 2010 as soon as possible;
- priority development and improvement of the high-capacity north-south and east-west rail corridors, as well as a network solely devoted to fast freight transport;
- a thorough review of international rules on liability in maritime transport;
- the introduction of an aviation fuel tax, and the establishment of a Joint Transatlantic Aviation Agreement, as a basis for a future regulatory framework for global air transport services;
- efforts to increase the proportion of safer and more environmentally friendly transport modes;
- a new European transport fund to ensure that the EU's policies are financially viable and credible; and
- the submission of an EC Communication on the transport situation in the accession countries.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.europarl.eu.int>

The White Paper on Transport Policy is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy_transport/library/lb_texte_complet_en.pdf

New Charter on Sustainable Development

The International Association of Public Transport (UITP), the world authority on urban and regional mobility, will launch a Charter on Sustainable Development at its World Congress on Public Transport in Madrid this May. The charter will be accompanied by a detailed brochure which sets out public transport's contribution to sustainable development, and calls for a balance to be struck between private and collective modes of transport.

Public transport consumes 3.7 times less energy per passenger than private modes of

transport, according to the 'Millennium Cities Database of Sustainable Development', a UITP study of 100 cities worldwide. The difference is even more dramatic in the case of Japan, where public transport is as much as ten times more energy-efficient than private modes of transport. The study also shows that cities that have efficient public transport systems do far less damage to the environment. Out of the 35 cities studied in Western Europe the one with the highest carbon dioxide emissions is Bologna with 206.10 kg per capita, while the lowest with only 21.62 kg is Amsterdam, where the bicycle is a very popular form of transport. Emission levels in US cities, where the automobile dominates, are consistently higher. For example, annual emissions in Atlanta and Houston total a startling 399 and 243.70 kg per capita respectively.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.uitp.com>

The Daphne II Programme

The EC has decided to transmit to the EP and the Council a draft decision on the 'Daphne II' Programme (2004 – 2008), aimed at preventing violence against women and children and protecting victims and at-risk groups. This follows on from the Daphne Programme (2000 – 2003) and an initiative of the same name launched by the EC in 1997. Since the launch of the Daphne Initiative (with a budget of €13 billion) and the Daphne Programme (with a budget of €20 million), the EC has received some 1800 project proposals, of which 270 have received finance.

The proposal concerning 'Daphne II' calls for a larger budget of €41 billion in order to meet the current high level of demand and allow for the arrival of the new Member States in 2004. Projects may cover all types of violence and all aspects of this phenomenon (violence in the family, violence in schools and other establishments, violence at work, commercial sexual exploitation, genital mutilation, health repercussions, violence against women, trafficking in human beings, rehabilitation of perpetrators, etc.). The best way of reaching and helping project beneficiaries is invariably via victim-support agencies. Training bodies, universities, voluntary associations, research centres and local authorities (e.g. municipal councils) are also eligible to receive support under the Daphne Programme.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/project/daphne/en/index.htm

Centre for Cyber Security

The EC has unveiled plans for a European Network and Information Security Agency, charged with serving as a centre of competence where both Member States and EU Institutions can seek advice on matters relating to cyber security. The aim of the new thirty-strong expert task force is to avert cyber attacks on key European installations.

The new agency will begin its operations in January 2004. The agency is expected to cost €24.3 million between 2004 and 2009. The tab will increase by a further €9 million upon the joining of the ten EU accession states. Individual Member States have already established crisis units – known as Computer Emergency Response Teams – in an effort to cope with increasing cyber crime. However, the current system lacks central co-ordination. The proposal will require the support of the majority of Member States and the

EP. Currently some 90 per cent of EU businesses are connected to the internet, and most of them operate a web site.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release IP/03/208 of 10/02/03, available from:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh>

RESEARCH NEWS

ERC Debate

Leading life scientists meeting in Paris in February to discuss the possible creation of a European research council (ERC) reached a consensus on certain key issues, but left a number of questions unanswered. The discussion, held at the UNESCO headquarters, brought together Nobel Prize winners, heads of research organisations and scientists from across Europe, in an attempt to agree on fundamental principles and a basic structure for the proposed body.

All were agreed on the need for any ERC to focus its efforts and resources on supporting basic research. Many participants felt that the long-term nature of fundamental research, along with its lack of financial guarantees, meant that industry would be reluctant to provide the necessary funding, and an ERC was an ideal candidate to fill the gap. Another recurrent theme was of an ERC providing funds to improve European research infrastructures. The need for action was highlighted with reference to a recent study, which found that of the world's top 20 facilities in the field of life sciences, only two were located in Europe. However, delegates were unable to agree on the question of whether the ERC should provide competition to national research councils. The President of Euroscience argued that the existence of competition between scientists and funding bodies was the key to achieving excellence in research, but others argued that if the ERC sought to compete with national councils the idea would never receive the backing required to make it a reality. There were also disagreements over funding issues. A document will be produced containing the contributions of all involved in the event.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

CORDIS Press Release 19760 of 21/02/03, available from:

<http://dbs.cordis.lu/news/en/home.html>

Debate on European Universities

A Communication on the role of universities in the Europe of knowledge has been published by the EC, as part of an initiative instigated by Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin and Education and Culture Commissioner Viviane Reding. The Communication invites interested parties to join a debate on key issues for higher education, such as funding, autonomy, professional standards, how to attain and sustain excellence, the contribution to local and regional growth, and how to achieve the European higher education and research areas.

The Communication identifies a number of areas that need reflection and action, and raises a series of questions, such as:

- how to achieve adequate and sustainable incomes for universities, and to ensure that funds are spent most efficiently;
- how to ensure autonomy and professionalism in academic as well as managerial affairs;
- how to concentrate enough resources on excellence, and create the conditions within which universities can attain and develop excellence;
- how to make universities contribute better to local and regional needs and strategies;
- how to foster, through all of these areas, the consistent, compatible and competitive European higher education area called for by the Bologna Declaration; and
- how to foster the European Research Area set out as an objective for the EU by the Lisbon European Council, in March 2000.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

A copy of the Communication will shortly be available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/consultations/list_en.html

New Head of Busquin's Cabinet

Mr Yvan Capouet has been nominated as the new Chef de Cabinet of EC Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin, following the appointment of Daniel Jacob as Director at DG Personnel and Administration.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/index_en.html

Biotechnology for the Rich

At a meeting to discuss sustainable agriculture in developing countries Louise Fresco, of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation pronounced that there is a growing gap between the promise and the reality of the use of biotechnology and life sciences in sustainable agriculture. Professor Fresco stated that whilst 85 per cent of transgenic crops such as maize, canola and cotton are designed to reduce labour and input costs, crops such as chickpea and cassava that would help tackle poverty and hunger are not being cultivated as extensively due to 'a molecular divide between the rich and the poor'.

The suggested critical factor to redress this balance is to re-establish confidence in scientific research through a social contract that establishes open dialogue in society, addressing the real needs of developing countries and ensuring that the poor benefit from the progress made in biotechnology and life sciences. Such a contract should focus on a number of areas of research toward sustainable farming.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Highlights of the Conference 'Towards Sustainable Agriculture For Developing Countries' are available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2003/sadc/index_en.html.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation web site is available at:

<http://www.fao.org/>

Milk Regulation Gene

European researchers have discovered a gene that regulates both milk yield and the protein and fat content of milk. Building on a study to carry out the sparse mapping of the genome of the Finnish Ayrshire cow, originally undertaken by six research groups under the EU's FP4, Belgian and Finnish researchers have identified a variation in the growth hormone receptor gene in the bovine chromosome 20, that they claim greatly effects the milk yield and nutrient composition in Ayrshire, Holstein and Jersey cows.

One of the scientists involved, Dr Johanna Vilkki, is confident that the discovery will aid the selection of bulls that father high milk-producing cows. Further, it is believed that a cost effective version of the gene could increase the average protein content in milk by 0.06 per cent and the fat content by 0.15 per cent, although such increases may be at the expense of total milk yield. Alternatively, use of a watered down version of the gene could result in a decreased fat and protein content.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

MTT Agrifood Research Finland Press Release, available at:
<http://www.mtt.fi/tiedotus/ajankoht/030219a.html>.

Penguins Destroy Stomach Bacteria to Feed Chicks

A French research team has discovered that male king penguins can conserve food in their stomach for several weeks during their incubation fast. This means that they have food available to give to chicks when the female penguins are away searching for fish.

Research was carried out on samples from seven male penguins that were incubating eggs and conserving food. The samples showed many dead or non-viable bacteria. This suggests that penguins are able to keep food fresh by suppressing their own stomach bacteria with acrylic acid, which acts as an antibacterial agent, in order to feed their chicks. It seems that the penguins are able to control this process, by actively releasing bacterial agents as necessary.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.newscientist.com/news/news.jsp?id=ns99993411>

Rehabilitation of Prisoners through On-line Services

Learning and health support tools for prisoners are being developed through an FP5 IST project. Through the HERO ('health and educational support for the rehabilitation of offenders') project, a consortium involving researchers from Greece, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK is exploring ways of rehabilitating prisoners, improving prison conditions and reducing recidivism through access to on-line learning and health promotion.

Pilot schemes are underway in eight European prisons. Young offenders, aged between 18 and 25, as well as prisoners soon to be released, are targeted for participation in the schemes. These prisoners are being given access to CDs, the Internet, Intranets, and digital interactive television (DiTV) in order that they have interactive methods of learning. These tools also allow them to access information on health issues such as drugs, depression, and HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases; this responds to the fact that research has shown that a significant number of prisoners across Europe have

mental health or medical problems. In addition to the on-line package a static version of the tools has been developed. This is due to the fact that there have been some concerns about the possibility of prisoners accessing dangerous materials on-line. The off-line version is being used in remand centres, as well as prisons.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://inf2.pira.co.uk/factsheets/inform/et/hero.html>

eGovernment Study

A benchmarking study undertaken on behalf of the EC has concluded that EU Member States have made considerable progress in providing on-line public services, but more for businesses than for citizens. 20 basic public services in the 15 Member States, plus Norway, Iceland and Switzerland, were examined between October 2001 and 2002.

The findings show that 86 per cent of the 10,500 individual public services analysed are now on-line (a growth of 12 per cent in one year). In addition, there has been a substantial increase (from 45 to 60 per cent) of sophistication in the provision of public services (the 'sophistication' level expresses the quality of the service: basic information, one-way interaction, two-way interaction and full electronic case handling). However, there are more sophisticated on-line services for businesses than for citizens. The most developed services are income-generating services (e.g. taxes and social contributions). Other on-line public services are: registration (e.g. for births, deaths, marriages, cars), returns (services provided by government to citizens and businesses in return for taxes and contributions, e.g. public libraries) and permits and licences (e.g. building permit). Sweden and Ireland show the highest level of on-line sophistication. The EU launched the web-portal 'Public-Services.eu' in October 2002. This portal is an initiative of the EU IDA programme and aims to provide information and services to assist citizens and enterprises carry out cross-border activities with public administrations across Europe.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.cgey.com/news/2003/0206egov.shtml>

http://europa.eu.int/public-services/index_en.htm

Studying Nuclear Waste Management

The Belgian Nuclear Research Centre (SCK-CEN), in collaboration with ONDRAF/NIRAS, has set up the High Activity Disposal Experimental Site (HADES) project. This will be exploited by the European underground research infrastructure for disposal of nuclear waste in clay environment (EURIDICE). The joint venture is predominantly funded by the EU, in order to bring together the knowledge and experience of the two organisations.

The HADES laboratory is 224 meters below ground in a layer of 32 million year old Boom clay. The laboratory focuses on the chemical reactions between the environment and the waste forms to be disposed of, as well as the migration of radio elements. It is the only underground laboratory in the world to explore the feasibility of the disposal of high level radioactive waste in plastic clay. In February, Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin and Energy and Transport Commissioner Loyola de Palacio visited the site, which is situated in Mol, Belgium. It is hoped that this initiative will contribute to helping Member States to comply with recently-proposed directives calling for operational waste burial sites throughout Europe by 2013.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.sckcen.be/index.shtml>

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CULTURE

Network of eLearning Cities

The eLearning Industry Group (eLIG) is to create a network of 'eLearning cities' across Europe. eLIG is currently looking for communities wishing to collaborate with industry in a new eLearning environment. Once the network has been established, users will be able to receive eLearning content anywhere, any time and on any device.

The eLIG group will also provide advice to the EC and national governments on areas such as information technology and telecommunications infrastructure, as well as open standards that facilitate the exchange of eLearning content, and the development of a sustainable market for eLearning content.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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E-mail: secretariat@elig.org

Action Plan on Linguistic Diversity

In a speech to the EP in February, Viviane Reding, EC Education Commissioner, revealed details on the future action plan for language learning and linguistic diversity. In November 2002, the EC presented its report on the actions and results of the European Year of Languages in 2001. Highlighting conclusions of this report, Viviane Reding announced her objective of having an action plan on language learning and linguistic diversity adopted by the EC by summer 2003.

The aims of the future action plan include extending the advantages of learning new languages to all citizens, promoting better teaching of all languages, and creating conditions which allow lifelong language learning opportunities. Actions to support these aims are likely to include promotion of the linguistic diversity of the EU, drawing attention of public institutions to the special needs of certain languages, promotion of regional and minority languages, increased support for these languages in all EU programmes, and development of every citizen's linguistic abilities.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/consult_en.html

http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/action/lingui_en.htm

Cross-Channel University

An innovative cross-channel university project is to link academics in southern England and northern France. The 'Transmanche University' will be jointly funded by education departments in France and the UK, as part of a €2.1million education accord.

The project, described as a transfrontier higher education network', will connect the University of Kent, three universities in Lille, and the University of the Littoral, based at Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk. It is expected that the university's first students will begin courses in autumn 2004, with both English and French languages being used.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.obhe.ac.uk/news/2003.html>

EXTERNAL COLLABORATION

China and US Commit to ITER

Delegations from China and the US joined those from the EU, Canada, Japan and Russia at the Eighth ITER Negotiations Meeting, which was held in St Petersburg, Russia, in February. This is considered to be a historic milestone.

ITER, the International Thermonuclear Energy Reactor, is due to be built over the next decade, at a cost of approximately \$5 billion. The US withdrew from the ITER negotiations some time ago, following a review of its fusion policy. However, they, along with China, are now committed to the development of fusion energy.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.iter.org/>

EU/US Joint Research Initiatives

Following the conclusion of the first bilateral EU/US joint meeting on climate change science and technology research, the two sides have announced plans to initiate collaborative projects in six areas of climate research.

The delegations identified suitable co-operative research activities in the following areas: carbon cycle research, aerosol-climate interactions, feedbacks and climate sensitivity, integrated observation systems and data, carbon capture and storage, and hydrogen technology and infrastructure. Within these areas, specific initiatives will include studies on the influence of aerosols on clouds, climate and the water cycle in sensitive regions such as the Mediterranean, and the joint development of integrated observation systems to provide the data needed for climate change research. Other non-greenhouse gas emitting energy sources, for example nuclear and renewable energies, although not discussed in detail, were mentioned as worthy for future discussion and co-operation. Both the US and the EU agreed to designate points of contact to co-ordinate the development of the projects, and to monitor progress once activities are underway. The two sides also agreed to review the progress of their co-operation at the next joint meeting, which could take place in Italy later this year.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/17493.htm>

ESA and Russia Sign Space Agreement

The European Space Agency (ESA) and Russia have signed an agreement on co-operation and partnership in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. The agreement succeeds a 1990 agreement between ESA and the USSR. Geopolitical developments over the last decade have, according to ESA, 'enhanced co-operation and genuine partnership between ESA and Russia'.

New areas for co-operation include launchers and robotic and human planetary exploration. The Russian aviation and space agency, Rosaviakosmos, will implement the agreement on the Russian side. ESA and Rosaviakosmos are already working together in a number of areas, such as human spaceflight, microgravity research, Earth observation, satellite navigation and space science.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.esa.int>

EVENTS and AWARDS

Intellectual Property Marketing Workshop

The Association of European Science and Technology Transfer Professionals (ASTP) will hold a workshop on intellectual property marketing and licensing strategies in London, UK, on 3 April 2003. The day will include presentations on: deciding between licensing or creating a spin-out; how to exploit technology to a company; balancing the risks and rewards for both parties in licensing deals; the company perspective; and a case study focusing on the licensing of a new medical imaging device.

The workshop is particularly designed for technology transfer managers who have been in their posts for between six months and a few years, and who feel that they are not yet as effective as they could be.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.astp.net>

Nobel Day

The World Life Science Forum, in conjunction with 'Nature', will bring together 11 Nobel Laureates – including James Watson – to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the first publication of the DNA Structure. 'Nobel Day' aims to address the question "What is Life? 50 years after the double helix discovery", by looking retrospectively at the birth of modern biology.

The event, to be held in Lyon on 8 April 2003 is free-of-charge for BioVision participants but requires on-line registration.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Information on 'Nobel Day' and 'Biovision: the World Life Sciences Forum' is available at: <http://www.biovision.org/>

Forum on Venture Capital

The fourth international venture capital forum will take place in Chalkidiki, Greece, from 14 to 16 May 2003.

The aim of the event is to facilitate discussion between investment professionals and policy makers, entrepreneurs, academics and researchers. Participation of entrepreneurs from innovative technology companies based in Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Israel, Romania, Turkey and countries from the former Yugoslavia is particularly welcome.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.4vcforum.gr>

EUREKA Meets Asia

The third 'Eureka meets Asia' event will be held in Macao from 26 to 30 May 2003, with the theme 'Green Enterprises for Sustainable Development'. Its aim is to stimulate the development of scientific and technological co-operation activities between R&D enterprises. It will include a European and Asian technology exhibition, and a brokerage event for project promotion in areas of the environment, life sciences and information technologies.

The EC will take advantage of the presence of European and Asian researchers and entrepreneurs by holding a seminar on the funding opportunities for Europe-Asia co-operation offered by FP6. In addition, other support mechanisms for co-operation with Asia will be highlighted, notably the ASIA LINK programme, of particular relevance to universities; this is a new EC initiative to promote partnerships and links between European and Asian higher education institutes (South and South-East Asia, China).

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.eureka-asia.org.mo>

EURESCO Conference on Bionanotechnology

A EURESCO conference on bionanotechnology will take place in Granada, Spain, on 9 to 14 July 2003. The conference is designed to foster research at the physical/life sciences interface on biological or biologically-inspired molecular-scale devices. The programme is designed around four main themes in bionanotechnology (which are not intended to be exclusive): biomolecular electronics and photonics, molecular motors and novel devices.

The conference is open to researchers world-wide, whether from industry or academia. Participation will be limited to 100. The emphasis will be on discussion about new developments. Grants will be available, in particular for nationals aged under 35 from EU or Associated States. The deadline for applications for participation is 14 April.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.esf.org/euresco/03/lc03192>

Managing the Marine Environment

The Institute of Oceanology in Varna, Bulgaria, is organising a conference on scientific policy challenges towards effective management of the marine environment. The event will take place from 13 to 18 October 2003, and is linked to a project, CESUM-BS, funded under the international co-operation programme in FP5. This project is developing measures for sustainable development and management of the Black Sea region, and harmonising regional regulations with those of the EU.

The conference is intended to allow exchange and dissemination of environmental and socio-economic knowledge, experiences and achievement; it should also help in defining a strategy for environmental management of the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions. It will be followed by a forum on the 'global monitoring for environment and security' (GMES) initiative.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.io-bas.bg/cesum-bs/indexconference.htm>

Descartes Prize 2003

Further information is now available on this year's call for the Descartes Prize, which has a deadline of 13 May 2003. The prize is awarded for excellence in transnational collaborative research.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.cordis.lu/descartes>

http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call_details.cfm?CALL_ID=54

NEW PUBLICATIONS and ON-LINE RESOURCES

European SMEs Reports

The Observatory of European SMEs has published four new reports based on its research for 2002. The Observatory was established in 1992 to monitor the performance of SMEs and to provide policy makers, researchers and SMEs themselves with key data on issues such as employment levels, production and competitiveness.

The new reports, available on the DG Enterprise website, provide data on the following areas:

- business demography in Europe;
- high-tech SMEs in Europe;
- recruitment of employees: administrative burdens on SMEs in Europe; and
- highlights from the 2002 Survey.

The Observatory reports cover nineteen countries: the 15 EU Member States, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Research for the reports is carried out by the European Network for SME Research (ENSR).

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/analysis/observatory.htm

SMEs in Europe

Eurostat, the statistical office of the EU, has released a new publication entitled 'SMEs in Europe: Competitiveness, innovation and the knowledge-driven society'. The publication is the first in a series of 'detailed tables' focussing on topics relevant to SMEs. It contains a wide range of up-to-date information from diverse Eurostat and EC databases.

The series is aimed at both economic operators in the sector and anyone who wishes to obtain detailed information and develop a genuine understanding of the development and needs of European business. Specifically, this publication analyses the structure, performance and conduct of SMEs in Europe, provides detailed information on the needs and evolution of European enterprises, and gives a clear picture of the opportunities facing SMEs.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-catalogue/EN?catalogue=Eurostat>

eEurope 2002 Action Plan

The EC's Final Report on the eEurope 2002 Action Plan is now available. The report finds that the initiative has been a 'major success', with the majority of its 64 targets achieved.

Specifically, the Report highlights the following achievements:

- Internet connectivity has grown rapidly: in 2002, more than 90 per cent of the EU's schools and businesses were on-line and over half of Europeans were regular Internet users. Europe now has the world's fastest backbone research network (GEANT). However, significant differences remain in connectivity between Member States.
- A legislative framework has been agreed for e-commerce and electronic communication: telecom legislation has strengthened competition, prices have fallen, and consumer protection in e-commerce has improved.

Increasing effective use of the Internet is the focus of eEurope 2005, which aims to improve on the 2002 Plan's accomplishments. The eEurope 2005 Action Plan covers the period 2003-2005. The objectives of the Plan were approved at the Seville Summit in June 2002.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/news_library/documents/acte_eEurope_2002_en.doc

Academy of Finland Newsletter

The Academy of Finland now produces a monthly newsletter to provide updates on basic research funded in Finland and other news of the Finnish world of science.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

To be added to the mailing list, contact:

viestinta@aka.fi

The website of the Academy of Finland is at:

<http://www.aka.fi>

Assistance for Participants in FP6

The EU-sponsored IPR Helpdesk has produced a number of documents to facilitate participation in FP6.

Recent additions to their briefing papers, guides and tutorials include:

- a tutorial on the intellectual property regime of FP6;
- 'The creation of an entity in charge of the exploitation of RTD results: What are the best choices?';
- 'Networks of Excellence'; and
- a tutorial on consortium agreements for participants under FP6.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The documents are all available from the IPR Helpdesk web site at:

<http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org>

eLearning Portal

Viviane Reding, EC Education Commissioner, has announced the launch of a new eLearning portal. This portal provides information on Community initiatives such as the eLearning programme (2004 – 2006) which is currently being adopted. It also links with national initiatives, both public and private, and has contributions from experts on subjects ranging from 'eLiteracy' to the situation in the candidate countries.

The new website is expected to make it possible to disseminate best practice in the use of new communication technologies in education and will also allow users to search for projects under way and contact the people responsible for them. An open forum is now available, the discussion centering on a common definition for e-learning.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/>

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/elearning/>

CORDIS

CORDIS is the Community Research and Development Information Service. It is a web-based service which provides information on EU R&D programmes and related issues.

URL: <http://www.cordis.lu>

EUR-LEX (Official Journal C and L)

This web site provides information on European Union Law. It includes electronic copies of the Treaties and recent copies of the Official Journal of the European Communities (OJ). The OJ, published daily in eleven languages, consists of two related series, the L series (Legislation) and the C series (Information, notices and preparatory EU legislation), a supplement and an annex. EUR-Lex provides free access to the C and L series of the Official Journal for a period of forty-five days following publication. (The OJ issue with the Euro exchange rates (L 359, 31/12/1998) is permanently available in PDF format in EUR-Lex).

URL: EUR-LEX <http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/index.html>

Official Journal C & L <http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/oj/index.html>
Treaty of Amsterdam <http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/index.html>

EUROPA

EUROPA is the official European Union's Server. It contains links to the EP, the European Council, the EC and other EU institutions and contains information on EU policies listed by subject area.

URL: <http://www.europa.eu.int/index-en.htm>

RAPID

RAPID is a database giving a daily view of the activities of the European Union as presented by the Institutions in their press releases.

EC Press Releases are available at:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh>

GLOSSARY

COST	European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research is a framework for scientific and technical cooperation, allowing the coordination of national research on a European level. http://www.netmaniacs.com/cost/
'Council'	'Council' refers to the 'Council of Ministers', the principle decision-making body within the European Union. It has both executive and legislative powers, the latter in some cases exercised jointly with the European Parliament (co-decision procedure). The Council is composed of one representative at ministerial level from each Member State. Which Ministers attend each Council meeting varies according to the subject discussed, e.g. The Minister of Science in the UK attends the Research Council. http://ue.eu.int/en/summ.htm
Culture 2000	First European Community Framework Programme in support of culture, which runs from 2000-2004 (inclusive). http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/culture/index_en.html
EC	The European Commission - made up of 20 Commissioners nominated by the Member States - both initiates proposals for EU legislation and executes EU policies and actions. http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/index_en.htm
EESD	Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development (FP5) http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/
eEurope	eEurope A political initiative of the EC to allow Europe to benefit fully from the Information Society.

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/eeurope/documentation/index_en.htm

- EP The European Parliament - which is made up of elected representatives (MEPs) from all the Member States. It shares decision-making power with the Council in a number of areas including research and education.
<http://www.europarl.eu.int/sg/tree/en/default.htm>
- ERA European Research Area. On 18 January 2000, the EC issued a Communication entitled "Towards a European Research Area" which proposed ways in which research in Europe could be more effectively organised and coordinated.
<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/area.html>
- ESC European Economic and Social Committee is a consultative body made up of representatives of Europe's employers' organisations, trade unions, farmers, consumer groups and professional associations.
<http://www.ces.eu.int/>
Press Releases:
http://www.ces.eu.int/en/acs/fr_acs_press_rels.htm
- ESF European Science Foundation.
<http://www.esf.org/>
- ESF The European Social Fund
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/esf/en/index.htm>
- Eureka Eureka is a Europe-wide network for Industrial Research and Development.
<http://www3.eureka.be/Home/>
- FP (FP5, FP6) The EU's Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. The Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) was adopted in 1998 and will run until 2002, when the next framework programme (FP6) is expected to supersede it.

FP5 is composed of four thematic programmes (see QoL, IST, Growth, EESD) and three horizontal programmes (see INCO II, Innovation and SMEs, and IHP).
<http://www.cordis.lu/fp5>
- Green Paper Green Papers are communications published by the European Commission on a specific policy area. Primarily they are documents addressed to interested parties who are invited to participate in a process of consultation and debate. In some cases they provide an impetus for subsequent legislation.
- Growth Competitive and Sustainable Growth (FP5)
<http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/>
- IHP Improving Human Potential Programme (FP5)
<http://www.cordis.lu/improving/home.html>

INCO II	Confirming the International Role of Community Research (FP5) http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/
INDU	The European Parliament Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy (FP5) http://www.europarl.eu.int/committees/en/default.htm
INNOVATION and SME	Promoting of Innovation and Encouragement of SME Participation (FP5) http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/
INTAS	International Association for the promotion of cooperation with scientists from the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union. http://www.intas.be/mainfs.htm
IST	Information Society Technologies Programme (FP5) http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/
MEDIA	The MEDIA Plus Programme (2001 - 2005) is to be introduced as a follow-up to the Media II programme which ends in December 2000. The programme aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the European audiovisual industry. Http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/avpolicy/media/index_en.html
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation http://www.nato.int/
PHARE	The Phare Programme is the European Union's instrument for financial and technical cooperation with the countries of central and eastern Europe. http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/phare/index.htm
QoL	Quality of Life Programme (FP5) http://www.cordis.lu/fp5/
RTD	Research and Technological Development
TACIS	The Tacis Programme aims to forge closer economic and political links with the former republics of the Soviet Union and Mongolia (also known as New Independent States (NIS)) http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg1a/tacis/index.htm
Treaty of Amsterdam	The Treaty of Amsterdam was signed in October 1997 and entered into force on 1 May 1999. http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/index.html

UUK Universities UK
(formerly the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals)
<http://universitiesuk.ac.uk>

White Paper White Papers are documents containing proposals for
Community action in a specific area. They often follow a
Green Paper.

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