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EU POLICY

Research Priorities of the Italian Presidency

The Italian Minister for Education, Universities and Research, Letizia Moratti, and Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin have presented the research priorities for the Italian presidency of the EU, under the broad umbrella of developing the ERA and the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives. The aims are to increase the volume of investment in RTD, with a clear focus on the role of SMEs, to develop and diversify the centres and networks of excellence, and to focus on the development and mobility of human resources.

Six broad policy areas are to be addressed. These are:

- The 3 per cent objective (implementing the measures set out in the Communication ‘Investing in research: an action plan for Europe’);
- Measures aimed at attracting and retaining researchers (see ‘Researchers in ERA Communication’ article, below);
- Discussion between ministers, at the Competitiveness Council in September 2003, on the European candidate site for the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER);
- Defining and implementing a coherent set of rules for collaboration between the EC and the European Space Agency (ESA);
- Reaching an agreement with Member States on an EC proposal for establishing criteria for EU funding of research projects involving the use of human embryonic stem cells; and
- Organisation of a follow-up conference in Trieste in November to assess progress of European co-operation on research infrastructures, and stimulate further initiatives.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://www.cordis.lu/italy/priorities_busquin.htm

http://www.istruzione.it/prehome/ministro/interventi/2003/09_07_03.shtml (In Italian only)

Convention Signs Draft EU Constitution

The European Convention, set up by the Laeken European Council in December 2001, successfully completed its work after more than 16 months of debate. On 10 July 2003, the 105-member Convention, grouping representatives of parliaments and governments of 15 current and ten future Member States, as well as three candidate countries, adopted its final proposal for a future European Constitution. The final draft, submitted to the Italian Presidency, will be used as a starting point for the six-month Inter-Governmental Conference, to commence in October this year.

With the first two parts of the draft Constitution endorsed in June by the leaders of the enlarged EU, the final text contains 338 articles defining the EU’s policies and institutions. On its last day, the Convention decided over the application of qualified majority voting.

Unanimity will remain the rule for the politically sensitive policy areas, such as the foreign and security policy, immigration and taxation. The final text also equips the EU with its own diplomatic service, with its headquarters in Brussels, to assist the future EU Foreign Minister. The EU plans to sign its new Constitution before the June 2004 elections for the EP. All the EU Member States and the EP must ratify the Constitution. The goal is for the Constitution to come into force in 2005, but some provisions would only go into effect in 2009.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The Draft Constitution is available at:

<http://european-convention.eu.int/docs/Treaty/cv00848.en03.pdf>

The Draft Treaty is available at:

<http://european-convention.eu.int/docs/Treaty/cv00820-re01.en03.pdf>

New Directors General

Three new EC Directors General have been named, all of whom will take up their new positions in September.

Eneko Landaburu, of Spanish nationality, has been named as the new Director General for External Relations. He has been Director General for Enlargement since 2000 and was chief negotiator with the candidate countries. He will replace Frenchman Guy Legras. Herve Jouanjean will be the new Deputy Director General for External Relations, responsible for relations with Latin America and Asia (excluding Japan and Korea). He is a French national and is currently a Director in the Trade DG, responsible for all matters relating to the OECD and WTO. Fabrizio Barbaso, of Italian nationality, will be acting Director General for Enlargement. He joined the EC in 1976, and has focused on numerous aspects of industrial and international relations. He is currently Deputy Director General for Agriculture.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/03/975 of 09/07/03, available at:

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

MEPs to Lift GMO Moratorium?

In July the EP adopted two legislative proposals, giving a strong political momentum towards lifting the moratorium on genetically-modified organisms (GMOs). Firstly, amendments to GM food and feed legislation include: new labelling requirements (only for those foods containing more than 0.9 per cent of authorised GMOs); measures to ensure the co-existence of GM and non-GM crops (with technical details of co-existence to be decided); food and feed that can also be used as seed requiring necessary authorisation before sale; and, an adopted amendment to enable Member States to take emergency action themselves in the event of severe risk.

Secondly, MEPs adopted an amendment that pre-packaged products produced from GMOs should be labelled. MEPs also agreed that the EC should create a central register at Community level, which would contain all available sequencing information and reference material for GMOs authorised to be put into circulation in the Community.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20030702-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION5>

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

The EC has proposed the creation of a new agency, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), to be able to respond faster to health threats, such as SARS, and to increase preparedness for a possible bio-terrorist attack. The ECDC, together with its expert network, would be able to deliver European-level advice to the EU and its Member States, facilitating rapid decision making towards controlling a new disease.

The main tasks of the ECDC would be:

- epidemiological surveillance and laboratory networking across the EU;
- early warning and response, with 24-hour availability of disease experts;
- providing scientific assessments and technical support;
- forward planning against health crises; and
- communicating on health threats, to both the general public and decision-makers.

The proposal will be forwarded to the EP and the Council for consideration under the co-decision procedure. If all goes as expected, the new Centre could be operational in 2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_overview/strategy/ecdc/ecdc_en

Italian Presidency Environment Priorities

Environmental groups are worried that the Italian Presidency will be too lenient on environmental policies. Amongst its priorities, the Italian Presidency will guide the discussions on chemicals legislation in the environment Council, in which the results of the ongoing Internet consultation on the workability of the new system for registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals (REACH) system will be integrated.

Under the Italian Presidency, the EC will present a Communication clarifying the relationship between the European emissions trading system and the other flexible mechanisms created by the Kyoto Protocol (joint development and clean development mechanisms). A debate will be launched on the upcoming EC proposal for fluorinated gases regulation, and the Presidency will also work towards the final adoption of the directive on emissions trading. Sustainability indicators, aimed at integrating the environment into sectoral policies, will be adopted, and later applied in the annual review of the EU's sustainable development strategy. Priorities will be set as regards consumption and production patterns, water, energy, chemicals, biodiversity, governance, and trade and finance. Additionally, each Council configuration will make a comprehensive contribution, including measures and timetables on relevant topics of the Johannesburg Summit implementation plan.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.ueitalia2003.it>

Italian Presidency Energy Priorities

In his speech to the EP's Energy and Industry Committee in July, Antonio Marzano, Italian Minister of Productive Activities, announced that two main dossiers will be high on the agenda during the Italian Presidency: the second reading of the Cogeneration Directive,

and the Directives on gas and oil stocks. The Presidency also expects a number of upcoming initiatives from the EC, including communications on gas and electricity infrastructure in an enlarged Europe and follow-up of the 2002 Johannesburg Earth Summit, proposals on minimum energy efficiency standards for electrical appliances, and a proposal for a Directive on the management of demand.

The energy-related meeting highlights during the second half of 2003 – the duration of the Presidency – will be:

- An informal Energy and Environment Council in Tuscany in July, focusing on reconciling environmental objectives with energy policy objectives;
- The Euro-Mediterranean Energy Co-operation Conference (early December in Rome); and
- The Energy Council (4 and 5 December in Brussels).

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.ueitalia2003.it/EN/Temi/traspTelEner/ObiettiviUE.htm#ener>
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy/library/chpdraftdirectiveen.pdf>

Agreement on Marco Polo Programme

MEPs have agreed to accept without amendments the Council's common position on the Marco Polo Programme, which promotes transport intermodality and aims to achieve by 2010 a balance between modes of transport at 1998 levels. Smaller, innovative projects to reduce pressure on road networks are to be encouraged under the programme. The Council agreed a budget of €75 million for a four-year period (2003 to 2006).

The following amended actions will be funded:

- modal transfer measures (start-up aid for new non-road freight services): the minimum subsidy threshold is €500,000 instead of the EC's proposed €1 million;
- catalyst measures (launching new services offsetting market shortcomings): the minimum subsidy threshold is €1.5 million instead of the EC's proposed €3 million; and
- common learning actions: (aid for co-operation and know-how transfers): the minimum subsidy threshold is €250,000 instead of the EC's proposed €500,000.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+DN-20030703-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION2>

DAPHNE II to be Launched in 2004

The Women's Rights Committee has now adopted a report on the second stage of the 'Daphne II' programme (2004 – 2008) to prevent violence against children, young people and women and to protect victims and groups at risk. Daphne II will have an increased budget in an attempt to keep pace with the increase in violence and the imminent accession of new countries to the EU. For this reason, the EC proposed a reference figure of €41 million for Daphne II, with a possible additional amount for the period 2004 to 2006, in view of enlargement. This would bring the total reference figure up to €49.2 million.

The report proposes to increase the programme's budget to €65 million, to allow more participation from NGOs. However, the Committee adopted instead an amendment to set

the budget at €50 million, a figure that the EC had said it could accept. This will enable Daphne II to start up in 2004 and avoid a conflict with the Council. However, other amendments could yet be adopted in EP plenary session in Strasbourg.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/funding/daphne/funding_daphne_en.htm

Membership of On-line Services Convention

In order to enhance the transparency and coherence of national rules on cross-border information services, the EC has proposed to sign 'Convention 180' of the Council of Europe. 'Convention 180' seeks to establish an international mechanism for the prior notification of national rules on on-line services.

Under the Convention, each signatory party may comment on drafts notified by the other parties, thereby contributing directly to the legislative process of setting up new rules for on-line services. This mechanism will, for the first time, make it possible to have an international system of regular consultation in a developing field, with important legal and economic implications in cross-border terms, in particular as regards the exercise of fundamental freedoms and rights. In addition to the 45 Member States of the Council of Europe, observer states (such as the US, Canada, Japan and Mexico), as well as the EU, may become members of the Convention and may participate in its international legal information and administrative co-operation system.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/03/955 of 08/07/03, available at:

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

Barriers to 3G and Digital TV

In a Communication presenting an analysis of the barriers that are currently preventing widespread access to new services and applications of the information society, the EC pays particular attention to the issue of promoting open platforms in digital television and third generation (3G) mobile communications, as called for during the Barcelona and Seville European Councils. It is believed that the development of a multi-platform environment that incorporates these technologies could play a key role in providing citizens with widespread access to the Internet, as well as a greater freedom of choice in terms of the applications and services available.

The Communication notes that factors that could limit widespread access to electronic services in future go beyond those of open interfaces and open platforms and that technology barriers can be overcome wherever there is a strong commercial incentive to do so. However, the creation of an Information Society means putting into place a series of measures, both technical and non-technical, to create the conditions necessary for an Information Society to evolve. Such measures include: examining closely the impact of patenting on market entry in this area; promoting user trust and confidence in interactive services; developing acceptable business models for the deployment of the necessary infrastructure; and clarifying the regulatory frameworks for these technologies.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/topics/telecoms/regulatory/maindocs/documents/acte_en.pdf

Accession Countries and Cohesion Funds

In reporting on the progress made by the ten countries set to join the EU in May 2004, EC officials have commented that although considerable progress had been made in preparations for sound and effective management of cohesion funds, there still remains much work to be done on the implementation of legislation, in order for the EC to approve funds for January 2004. Ten areas requiring urgent attention have been identified concerning the legislation implementation and alignment.

The EC is actively helping to set the right priorities for the acceding countries, recognising the positive influences of the pre-accession instruments, and hoping that these actions will form a good basis for the November monitoring report. Negotiation of the programming documents will take place in the second half of 2003, giving acceding countries the chance to address particular challenges and to verify implementation of all necessary actions.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/themes/enlarge_en.htm

RESEARCH NEWS

Researchers in ERA Communication

A new EC Communication on 'Researchers in the ERA: One Profession, Multiple Careers' analyses the current research career landscape across Europe and provides recommendations for addressing the key issues to make progress towards the ERA and the 3 per cent objective.

The communication identifies and analyses different aspects of a researcher's career that conditions its development at European level, and identifies areas which hinder the attractiveness of research as a career for the younger generation. Recommendations for initiatives are made at strategic, European and national levels, and specific actions are identified for the EC in its interactions with Member States and the stakeholders of the research community.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The full Communication is available at:

<http://dbs.cordis.lu/cordis->

[cgi/autoftp?FTP=/documents_r5/natdir0000046/s_2063005_20030722_123945_2063en.pdf&ORFN=2063en.pdf](http://dbs.cordis.lu/cordis-cgi/autoftp?FTP=/documents_r5/natdir0000046/s_2063005_20030722_123945_2063en.pdf&ORFN=2063en.pdf)

UK Parliamentary Report on S&T

A report by the UK House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee, entitled 'UK Science and Europe: Value for Money?', has been published.

The report assesses UK participation in the FPs, concluding that these are useful mechanisms for research co-operation, but that there are a number of areas where improvement is needed. The report makes recommendations as to how the programmes could be improved in a variety of ways, including the application process, the selection process, and opportunities for basic research.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The report is available from:

<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmsctech/386/386.pdf>

Stem Cell Research in FP6

Given the sensitive nature of human embryonic stem cell research, the Council of Ministers and the EC agreed before signing off on FP6 that further ethical guidelines on governance and monitoring of such research would have to be adopted before the end of 2003, and before any such research projects would be funded. The EC proposal on this has now been published. This does not aim to set universal ethical principles, nor does it aim to provide guidelines for EU Member States, since this is not within the remit of the EU, merely the conditions for FP6 research involving the derivation of stem cells from human supernumerary embryos. The proposal is fully in line with the various opinions of the European Group on Ethics (EGE). With proposals to set-up a European registry of stem cells, and to establish public stem cell banks, the EU hopes to provide optimal access to, and use of, stem cells for public research purposes.

Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin said that 'The decision to fund human embryonic stem cell research from the Sixth Framework Programme was already taken by Council and Parliament last year. By funding this research and by setting strict ethical rules for such funding, the EU contributes in a responsible way to advancing this science for the benefit of patients across the world, while at the same time ensuring that it takes place within a clear ethical framework.'

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/03/969 of 09/07/03, available at:

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

European Group on Ethics Opinions:

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

The EC Proposal Document is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2003/com2003_0390en01.pdf

Research on Tattoos and Body Piercing

New EC research results give a comprehensive overview of potential health risks associated with tattoos and body piercing, both of which are on the increase across Europe. If appropriate attention is not paid not hygiene and health standards, both practices can result in viral infections such as hepatitis and HIV, bacterial and fungal infections, allergic reactions such as skin irritation and urticaria, malignant lesions such as melanoma, leprosy, and other serious diseases.

One major problem is that there is a lack of knowledge about the chemical structure, identity, and toxicological profiles of many of the dyes used in tattooing. The study identifies substances associated with adverse health effects, and makes

recommendations about the development and use of safe materials. Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin stated that he hopes that the results from the EU research will raise awareness of the hazards associated with tattooing and encourage practitioners in the profession to respect safety requirements, and policy makers across Europe to take appropriate steps to address this issue.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.jrc.cec.eu.int/>

http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons_safe/news/eis_tattoo_proc_052003_en.pdf

http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons_safe/news/eis_tattoo_risk_052003_en.pdf

http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/cons_safe/news/eis_tattoo_req_052003_en.pdf

Human Development Report 2003

Research by the UN has revealed that several EU Member States rank high as best countries to live in. The top ten countries were Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Australia, Netherlands, Belgium, United States, Canada, Japan, and Switzerland. A report, released in July, seeks to go beyond per capita income and includes such factors as educational levels, health care and life expectancy in measuring a nation's well-being. Of the 175 countries surveyed, the lowest human development rates were found in Burkina Faso, Niger and Sierra Leone.

At the UN General Assembly's millennium summit in 2000, world leaders set eight targets for reducing poverty, hunger and illness around the world by 2015. This latest research says that only one of those goals will be achieved by 2015: cutting by half the proportion of people living on less than one US dollar per day. In contrast to the widely held assumption of slowly increasing wealth, 54 nations are actually poorer now than they were in 1990, including twenty in Sub-Saharan Africa and seventeen in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/>

PEOPLE Survey Gauges Urban Air Quality

Those who quit smoking and leave their car at home can significantly reduce their exposure, and that of others, to harmful air pollutants, according to a study published by the EC under the 'Population Exposure to Air Pollutants in Europe' (PEOPLE) project. For 12 hours in October 2002, 125 volunteers used special sensors in Brussels to monitor their exposure to benzene – the first carcinogenic substance to be regulated by EU air quality laws – which is produced by car traffic and smoking. Similar surveys have also been conducted in Lisbon (October 2002) and in Bucharest and Ljubljana (May 2003).

According to the research, smokers are by far the most polluted class of citizens, exhibiting a median value of 7.5 micrograms of benzene per cubic metre of air. The tests showed that benzene concentrations in private homes were twice that of the city background air, with a median value of 6.4 micrograms per cubic metre. In bars, the benzene concentration was high, with a median value of 10.8 micrograms per cubic metre.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.people-pt.net/eindex.html>

Trans-European Networks and Research

The EC has outlined its latest step aimed at boosting investment, as part of the 'Initiative for Growth', in trans-European networks (TENs) and major research and development projects. The EC wants Community funding to become more focussed on high-priority projects, and aims to better involve the European Investment Bank (EIB). Faced with the current economic slowdown throughout Europe, the EC is striving to boost the involvement of private capital in targeted investment projects.

Consequently, the EC proposes to concentrate the use of TEN budget line funds on fewer priority projects, promote project co-ordination among Member States, consider the creation of a European guarantee fund promoting the sharing of risks with private investors, and improve the EIB's ability to provide support to TEN and R&D projects.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/03/960 of 09/07/03, available at:

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

Europe's Public Research Centres

Contrary to commonly held views that public research centres are in decline and that their usefulness is questionable, recent EC research led by PREST, at the University of Manchester, UK, shows that the 769 centres surveyed across Europe are, in fact, more dynamic, more significant and are building stronger links with industry with moves from basic to applied research. The Commissioner for Research, Philippe Busquin, underlined the important contribution of these centres to the ERA objectives.

After recent changes, public sector reform and commercialisation have meant that the sector is larger, with a more focussed mission, than previously thought. The centres are found to provide a natural route to reach traditional industry and SME's, with a particular competitive advantage in innovation. Several barriers were identified by the research, which, if tackled, could lead to greater rationalisation and integration of these centres, contributing greatly to the core EC ERA 2010 objective.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/indicators/docs/ind_report_prest1.pdf

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CULTURE

Italian Presidency Agenda for Education

Under efforts to achieve a knowledge-based Europe, the Italian Presidency will aim to deal with six priority education areas during its six-month term.

The areas are:

- Focus on the European eLearning programme and discussion on the next generation of European education, training and youth programmes (Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth);
- The launch of the new Erasmus Mundus Programme, which aims to foster co-operation and mobility with regard to third countries;
- A Ministerial-level initiative, focussing on human capital as a factor of economic growth and innovation, and seeking to reinforce EU-level co-operation in the field of training;
- Raising awareness of the need for young people to play a greater role in policy and decision-making;
- A resolution on making the learning process in schools more attractive; and
- The preparation of a report for the Spring 2004 European Council on progress achieved in implementing a detailed work programme on the follow up of the objectives for education and training systems in Europe.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.ueitalia2003.it/EN/Temi/istrGiovCult/PrioritaPresidenza.htm>

Call for Linguistic Diversity in Constitution

The EP's Culture Committee has highlighted the lack of EU legislation on regional and less widely-used languages, despite the fact that around 40 million EU inhabitants are estimated to use a regional or minority language regularly in addition to the official language(s) of their country. In order to support these languages, changes are required in the draft EU constitution to include, in the provisions on EU culture policy, a reference to the promotion of linguistic diversity, including regional and minority languages as an expression of cultural diversity.

In addition, MEPs want the EC to carry out a feasibility study on the creation of a European Agency for Linguistic Diversity and Language Learning. They also want a multi-annual programme drawn up on linguistic diversity (including regional, minority and sign languages), together with financial measures to promote acceptance of multilingualism, including co-existence between official and 'co-official' languages. They add that the budgetary impact of these measures should be compatible with internal policies, without any reprogramming of existing policies.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/committees/cult_home.htm

European Logo Competition

A competition for the design of a logo for European Year of Education through Sport 2004' has been launched. This is open to graphic design students living in the EU, one of the new Member States or in a country of the European Economic Area. The winner will receive a prize worth €5000 and a trip to the Athens Olympic Games or the European Football Championships in Portugal. Prizes will also be awarded for projects placed second and third.

The logo, which will be selected by the EC on the advice of a panel of experts in design and marketing, will be presented in autumn 2003. The closing date for the competition is 15 September 2003. The panel will announce its decision at the end of September, and an awards ceremony will be held at the European Sports Forum in Verona in November.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Full details, including conditions for participation in the competition, are available at:
<http://www.eyes-04-design-competition.info/>

EXTERNAL COLLABORATION

INTAS Co-operation with NIS

With a view to further developing co-operation with the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union in the field of space research, a new convention has been signed between INTAS (International Association for the promotion of co-operation with scientists from the NIS) and CNES (Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales).

This new convention follows a first successful collaborative call held in 1997, which is recognised by the two parties to have been a great success. This year, the collaborative call for proposals for East-West co-operative research projects covers themes targeted at technology of space systems and, more specifically, mechanisms, control equipments and thermal control. The total amount of funding for the new collaborative call is €1 million, with the two parties, CNES and INTAS, each contributing half of the budget. These contracts ensure that resources are available for scientific activities in the east in research areas of interest to the west.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.intas.be>

€955 Million for Neighbourhood Programmes

The EU has proposed a €955 million programme to boost the enlarged EU's co-operation with its neighbours Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean.

The new 'Neighbourhood Programmes', to be launched in 2004, have funding confirmed until 2006, and are designed to improve the EU's interventions at its external borders after enlargement. The new programmes will ensure better co-ordination of the existing cross-border co-operation programmes, such as INTERREG (€700 million), PHARE (€90 million), TACIS (€75 million), CARDS (€45 million) and MEDA (€45 million). For the period after 2007, EC highlights a number of options including the creation of a single New Neighbourhood Instrument (2007 to 2013).

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/03/922 of 01/07/03, available at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh>
http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/crc/2003/com2003_0104en01.pdf

EVENTS and AWARDS

Marie Curie Information Days

In September, several Marie Curie Information Days will be held in various locations across the UK for interested parties from industry, universities, institutes of technology and research organisations. The Marie Curie Programme is the part of FP6 which focuses on researcher mobility and training. The Information Days, organised by the UK Research Office (UKRO) as UK National Contact Point for Human Resources and Mobility in FP6, in partnership with the organisations below, will provide an outline of the various schemes that provide funding for both individuals and groups, and guidance on preparing proposals. Two separate sessions are organised on each day – morning and afternoon – to accommodate the requirements of individual and group applicants.

Events will be held on the following dates: Monday 15 September, at the DTI conference centre, London (with DTI/CBI); Wednesday 17 September, Manchester University; and Friday 19 September, Conference Suite, University of Wales, Bangor (with University of Wales, Bangor and WDA). The date for an additional event in Bristol is still to be confirmed.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Full details of the events are available at:

<http://www.ukro.ac.uk/Public/mobility/Events/ncpeventautumn.htm>

Internet Research Conference

The International and Interdisciplinary Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers will be held on 16 October 2003 in Ontario, Canada. The theme of the conference is 'Broadening the Band'; the theme is intended to encourage participation from diverse disciplines, coming together to reflect on the emerging interdisciplinary space that is Internet research.

The conference will be organised by the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR). Research on the Internet is a growing part of academic work and AoIR was formed out of recognition of the need to bring together people from diverse academic and cultural perspectives in order to advance collective understanding of the impact of this technology on contemporary life.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Full details of the conference are available at:

<http://aoir.org/2003/>

AIDS Conference 2004

The 15th International AIDS Conference will take place in Bangkok, Thailand, from 11 to 16 July 2004.

The global event is organised by the International AIDS Society. It is expected to attract several thousand participants, including scientists and clinicians, health care workers, people living with AIDS, and journalists.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Full details of the event are available at:
<http://www.ias.se/aids2004/>

Winners of eEurope Awards Announced

The eEurope Awards for eGovernment Applications were announced on 7 July by Information Society Commissioner Erkki Liikanen at the eGovernment Conference in Italy. The three top prize winners were: a German initiative entitled 'The role of eGovernment for European competitiveness' (an integrated portal for eGovernment transactions, security and legally binding electronic signatures); an Austrian initiative entitled 'A better life for European citizens' (an on-line guide to authorities, offices and institutions); and a Spanish initiative entitled 'European, Central and Local Government e-Co-operation and Public eServices' (provision of electronic certificates by tax authorities).

Under the eEurope 2005 Action Plan, the EC foresees a total of four separate award competitions between 2003 and 2005: two in eGovernment and two in eHealth. The present competition for the 'eEurope Awards for eGovernment Applications' was launched through a public call to identify current best practices in the field. This led to 65 exhibits, which were selected, from 357 applications received.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.e-europeawards.org/>

Descartes Prize Participation

The EU's Descartes Prize for scientific excellence has had a record number of entries this year. The Prize was launched in 2000, and is awarded for outstanding results from European collaborative research projects in all scientific fields, including social sciences.

This year has seen submissions from 230 research teams comprising over 900 individual researchers from 30 different countries. Around 20 per cent of these submissions included researchers from candidate countries or third countries. There has also been an increase in participation of female scientists. In 2002, 13 per cent of project co-ordinators were female; this year the figure has risen to 17 per cent. The Grand Jury, who make the final decision on the winners of the €1 million prize, will consider the shortlist in the coming months, and the decision will be announced at an award ceremony in Rome in November 2003.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Information on the Descartes Prize is available at:
<http://www.cordis.lu/descartes/home.htm>

NEW PUBLICATIONS and ON-LINE RESOURCES

Researchers' Mobility Portal

The EC's Researcher's Mobility Portal is now available on-line. This pan-European portal provides general information about research grants and fellowships at EU, international,

national and regional level. This information can be adapted to a specific career stage and field.

Current research opportunities and job offers published by the different actors of the European research community (Universities, Industry, Foundations, etc.) are also displayed. In addition, the portal provides practical information about administrative and legal issues, such as conditions of entry, social security and tax schemes, as well as about cultural, intercultural and family-related aspects. Further information is also provided on current research policies, links to Mobility Centres for tailored assistance, and sections where organisations and researchers may be matched.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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

ERA and FP6 Slides

The UKRO Annual Conference took place in Sheffield, UK, in July. This event looked at the latest development in the ERA and FP6, as well as some non-FP opportunities, and involved 10 EC speakers. The slides for all presentations at the conference are now available on the UKRO website.

The topics covered are: the ERA, the FP6 Model Contract, Consortium Agreements in FP6, New and Emerging Science and Technology in FP6, INCO in FP6, Science and Society in FP6, Research, SMEs and Innovation, Universities in the Europe of Knowledge, the Asia Link programme, and the new Public Health programme.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The slides are available at:

<http://www.ukro.ac.uk/public/events/Conf2003/Index.htm>

New Irish Research Portal

Developed jointly by InterTradeIreland and the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (CHIU), 'expertiseireland.com' recognises the fact that universities and specialised research organisations provide the driving force for innovation. Launched at the beginning of July, this web-based portal aims to boost levels of collaborative R&D between industry and academia by providing easier access to research expertise.

The website has also been designed to meet the requirements of the academic sector, with all of the nine universities on the island being on board by the end of the year. The site provides a searchable database, with up-to-date details of academic and commercial expertise, funding information, technology transfer and collaborative opportunities on the island, both North and South. Uniquely, information for the database is sourced directly from the knowledge management systems of the island's research organisations. 'expertiseireland.com' will also include bulletin and news boards and detailed profiles of research experts, including information on publications, research projects, grants secured, and consultancy history.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

<http://www.expertiseireland.com/>

EUROPE DIRECT Web Assistance Service

The EC has extended its EUROPE DIRECT service to include one-on-one web assistance. The site's on-line call centre provides guidance and practical information on EU policies, in English and French, between 09:00 and 18:30 (Central European Time) from Monday to Friday. Over recent months, the call centre has received some 4,500 to 5,000 requests for information per month.

Users in the new Member States can already submit questions to EUROPE DIRECT either by e-mail or via the normal telephone number (+ 32 2 299 96 96; normal telephone charges apply). As of the end of 2003, however, callers from the new Member States will have full access to the toll-free telephone number (00800 6 7 8 9 10 11).

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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

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>

IGLO Project Search

The IGLO Project Service offers a forum for publishing and disseminating details of proposed FP6 project and/or research skills offered. Using the service will enable researchers to find contacts and partners within the international research community as well as contributing to the mobilisation of a critical mass of researchers in a specific research area.

URL: <http://www.iglortd.org/>

EUR-LEX (Official Journal C and L)

This website 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/questen.ksh>

GLOSSARY

A&S	Aeronautics and Space Priority (FP6) http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm
C&G	Citizens and Governance Priority (FP6) http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm
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
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/d

[ocumentation/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/>
- FQS Food Quality and Safety Priority (FP6)
<http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm>
- 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>
- GBH Genomics and Biotechnology for Health Priority (FP6)
<http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm>
- 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.

ITRE	The European Parliament Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy (FP5) http://www.europarl.eu.int/committees/en/default.htm
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 Priority (FP6) http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm
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
Mobility	Human Resources and Mobility Programme (FP6) http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation http://www.nato.int/
NMP	Nanotechnology, Materials and Production Priority (FP6) http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm
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
RTD	Research and Technological Development
SDGC	Sustainable Development and Global Change Priority (FP6) http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm
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://www.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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