

News on EU Research Policy and Programmes

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EU POLICY

Conclusions of European Council

The annual meeting of the European Council on the Lisbon Strategy took place in Brussels at the end of March 2004, and for the first day much of the debate was focussed on the Madrid bombings, adopting the Declaration on Combating Terrorism. While progress towards the Lisbon goals has been disappointing, the targets remain relevant, with an in-depth review due in 2005 to assess progress towards sectoral targets, EU performance in a global context, further measures to increase growth, governance and methods of communication. In particular the Council called upon Member States to increase their efforts.

Research and Development targets were also highlighted. The striking weakness in private sector investment in R & D, compared to performance elsewhere, was seen as a key problem. Greater efforts were asked for to strengthen interactions between public research bodies and industry. Retention, training and mobility of researchers and more competitive research promoting scientific excellence were also called for. Calls were made upon the Framework Programme itself to be simplified, more user-friendly, to enable more small and medium enterprise interaction, to boost future technologies and to support basic and applied research. The Council stated its support for basic research and looked with interest towards a possible EC proposal to establish a European Research Council.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release DOC/04/01 of 26 March 2004, available at:

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

Mr Ahern's report on the Council to the EP, available at:

http://www.eu2004.ie/templates/news.asp?sNavlocator=66&list_id=487

EP approves new Commissioners

As expected the EP has approved all Commissioners from the ten new Member States. In general the assessments of the candidates were positive, there were, however, critical remarks about lack of policy knowledge. No red cards not even yellow cards, affirmed EP president Pat Cox, while announcing that all of the ten new Commissioners had been approved after a series of three-day hearings in Brussels.

Some of the Commissioners however did get critical remarks about lack of in depth policy knowledge. While not rejecting any of the Commissioners, French MEP Josphe Daul, who chaired the hearings, noted that some of the committees, who conducted the hearings on candidatures, had stated that some Commissioners would need to learn more about their portfolios.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EP summary per new commissioner, available at:

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20040415-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N#SECTION1>

Preparatory action on security research

The EC recently presented the preparatory action for a Security Research (PASR) programme at an information day held in Brussels. The PASR is intended to assist the EU better to understand the specific issues involved in dealing with security issues in R&D. The aim is, by 2007, to develop a full Security R&D programme and develop a strong security industry to underpin an emerging "security culture" in the EU. With a budget of €65 million to be spent over three years (€15 million in 2004, and €25 million in 2005 and 2006) the preparatory action will focus on both military and civilian security issues (including border control, civil protection and disaster management). The preparatory action, although modelled in FP6, is not part of the Framework and operates under different rules.

The five main topics for 2004 include improving situation awareness, optimising security and protection of networked systems, protecting against terrorism (including bioterrorism), enhancing crisis management and achieving interoperability with integrated systems for information. These topics are to be delivered through two main types of activities: research projects and support activities.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC website on the security research action, available at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/security/index_en.html

EC highlights the role of industry in an enlarged EU

After relaunching the debate on the role of industrial policy in December 2002, the EC sketches the contours of an industrial policy for an enlarged EU in a Communication adopted on 20 April 2004. This responds to the concerns raised by the European Council and also responds to concerns about the risk of deindustrialisation and how we can anticipate and address on-going structural changes within European industry.

The EC calls for action in three areas: a better regulatory environment for business, including action to avoid over-regulation at EU or national level, better mobilising all EU policy to boost competitiveness particularly through action in areas like research, training, competition rules and regional aid, and working with individual sectors to develop policies responses which match specific needs, move up the value chain, anticipate and accompany structural transformations. Action in these areas will be implemented in the context of new financial perspectives up to 2013, which place particular emphasis on competitiveness. Finally, this Communication also provides a point of departure. Its analysis and recommendations will be important for the on-going review of the Lisbon strategy and the work of the high level group looking at Lisbon chaired by Wim Kok.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/04/501 of 20 April 2004, available at:
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh>

EC adopts new safe harbour for licensing of patents

The EC has adopted new rules for applying competition policy to the licensing of patents, know-how and software copyright. The rules reduce bureaucracy and increase legal certainty for companies, as more licensing agreements will benefit from a regulatory safe harbour, saving many agreements from individual scrutiny. They will also effectively contribute to the dissemination of technology and know how within the EU, in line with the

objectives set at the Lisbon Council in 2001. The new policy is part of the fundamental reform of the enforcement rules for antitrust which will come into force on 1 May.

Whilst licensing is important for economic development, it can also be anti-competitive, when competitors use licenses to divide markets between them. The new rules leave companies more freedom to devise their licensing agreements according to their commercial needs. However, the new Regulation provides the safe harbour only below certain market share thresholds, 20 per cent for licensing agreements between competitors and 30 per cent for agreements between non-competitors. The new block exemption Regulation will have a black list of hardcore antitrust violations. In other words, what is not explicitly excluded from the block exemption is now exempted. This contrasts and eliminates the strait jacket created by the white and grey lists contained in the 1996 Regulation.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/04/470 of 8 April 2004, available at:

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

Regulation and Guidelines, will soon be available at:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/whatsnew.html>

Influenza and how the EU should answer to a pandemic

The EC has adopted a paper indicating how the EU and its Member States respond to an influenza pandemic. Public health experts have warned that a new pandemic may be imminent and could present a major health threat. The EU and the World Health Organisation (WHO) raised this concern in the context of the current avian influenza outbreak in Asia as some animal influenza viruses can, occasionally, mutate into highly infectious human strains.

The EC document explains the stages, based on WHO definitions, of an influenza pandemic and sets out objectives for action. Moreover, it outlines the role of the Commission and EU Member States in pandemic preparedness planning and defines key actions in the main areas and at each of these stages. The paper also proposes areas where enhanced EU co-operation would clearly add value, including the creation of an EU network of reference laboratories for human influenza (an EU network for avian influenza already exists) and a mechanism to establish outbreak assistance teams. The importance of the existing EU early warning and response system for infectious diseases is emphasised, as is the initiative of the European Medicines Evaluation Agency to create a fast track approval mechanism for vaccines. The EC document is intended to stimulate debate and to provide guidelines to Member States as they update their national preparedness plans.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release IP/04/432 of 31 March 2004, available at:

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

European Health Agency

On 31 March, the Council voted in favour of the creation of a new European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The agency, to be based in Stockholm, will bring together the medical expertise which already exists at national level, and facilitate co-ordination between the national health organisations.

It is hoped that the agency will allow a quicker, more effective response to epidemics of infectious diseases, such as SARS. The ECDC is expected to be operational from 2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Public Health page on ECDC, available at:

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

New EC proposals for healthcare co-operation

On 21 April the EC proposed a number of initiatives which aim to encourage co-operation among Member States to raise standards of accessible, high quality healthcare which is at the same time financially sustainable. Healthcare is regularly identified as one of the most important issues for Europe's citizens. While responsibility for healthcare rests with Member States, there are a number of common challenges, such as the ageing society, increased needs and demands from citizens and rapid technological change.

The initiatives proposed include producing a new policy document on patient mobility and healthcare, establishing the "open method of co-ordination" to support national efforts and the forthcoming adoption of an Action Plan on e-Health. This action plan will address the crucial role of new technologies and new ways of delivering health. E-Health, covers actions such as using interoperable health care information systems, online and digital patient records and new services such as teleconsultation and e-prescribing.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/04/508 of 21 April 2004, available at:

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

EC website on e-Health, available at:

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/2005/all_about/ehealth/index_en.htm

International treaty on biodiversity

The EC and nine of its Member States have ratified the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, making it possible for the Treaty to enter into force on 29 June. The Treaty will ensure that plant genetic resources for research, breeding, food and agriculture are conserved and used in a sustainable manner, and that benefits from their use are equitably and fairly distributed across the North-South divide.

The legally binding agreement covers the most important agricultural crops, such as apples, rice, potatoes, maize, wheat and oats, as well as 29 forage species. However, critics of the Treaty say that many issues surrounding those technologies remain unresolved, including intellectual property rights and the patenting of genetic resources.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The text of the Treaty, available at:

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2003/com2003_0602en01.pdf

Reducing exposure to harmful substances at work

The EC is to ask representatives of workers and employers for their views on how to tackle gaps in existing legislation aimed at minimising exposure to substances that cause cancer and have other harmful effects. An estimated 32 million people are exposed to

such substances at levels that exceed what is considered as safe, and between 35,000 and 45,000 cancer deaths per year are due to exposures occurring in the workplace.

Four main questions appear in the document. The first issue to be covered is whether the current directive on exposure to cancer-causing substances should be extended to include substances which are detrimental to reproduction. The consultation also asks whether the number and levels of substances covered by the document are appropriate. The final question was whether the procedures in the Directive needed simplification and adaptation to scientific progress.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/04/391 of 26 March 2004, available at:
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh>

European Health Insurance Card

Most of the Member States should be in a position by 1 June 2004 to operate the Health Insurance Card system. The system would allow the millions of EU Citizens who travel for work, leisure, school exchanges to access healthcare whilst abroad that much easier. As welcomed by EC President Romano Prodi and President of the European Council, Bertie Ahern, it is hoped that the card will produce real benefits to users.

A transition period for introduction is available, but those Member State intending to launch on 1 June include Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Spain, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Estonia and Slovenia.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/04/390 of 26 March 2004, available at:
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh>

RESEARCH NEWS

Solving the electronic waste problem

A three-year EC-funded project, that has just come to an end in December 2003, provides an answer to the topical problems of how companies can handle the implications of new directives coming into force on the subject of disposal of electrical waste and the use of hazardous substances in their manufacture. The project has developed and successfully tested a new cost management methodology designed to evaluate the full financial responsibility over the lifetime of the electrical product. The new directives will come into force from mid 2005 and 2006 respectively and mean increased liability for added costs in production and later on, the collection and disposal of the goods.

With eight million tonnes of electronics waste per year in the EU, the current design-heavy costing structure and the dynamic nature of the market, the need for the costing methodology is clear. The new methodology integrates an environmentally indexed database, and a software tool for process, product and legal compliance assessments. All of this had to be done in a flexible user-friendly system adapting to existing client databases and environmental legislation. A series of case studies have been run for clients such as Motorola, Fujitsu Services and Siemens Medical Solutions, which have greatly helped in facing up to the new directives and impact on product design. The

consortium now hopes that the system will develop into the reference for European standardisation.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Details on the project and directives, available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/industrial_technologies/22-03-04_pro_green_en.html

Universities and Google work on access to research papers

Well-known search engine Google has teamed up with 17 universities around the world, including Italy and the UK to make research papers more accessible across the Internet. The project seeks to build on superarchive projects undertaken by one of the partners on the project, MIT. Allowing users to limit their searches to on-campus resources of research material, through metadata tags, will mean that the quality sources of information will be easier to find by Google's search engine.

Since the project will mean increased access to research material before it has been peer reviewed, this means that the project itself has met with some resistance from academics. It is hoped by the organisers however, that the access given to this pre-published information will mean freer circulation of research. It is also hoped that the project will raise the profile of the universities involved and give business a better idea about the work the universities are involved in. So far each of the institutions involved in the project already have, on average, 1,000 research articles in the archive, a number set to grow quickly over the next few years.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

More details on the project, available at:

http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi-bin/srchidadb?CALLER=NHP_EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:21885

A new partnership between standards and research

A new consortium supported by the EC Framework Programme has been established to improve interactions between research and standardisation groups. The Co-operation Platform for Research and Standards (COPRAS) was launched at a meeting for all partners, and will examine new standards-related technologies from over 300 EC funded IST projects across 23 technology areas. The consortium will facilitate the adoption of research results, with advice on their acceptance and challenges of use. Providing information on standardisation, it is hoped there will be a smoother progression of research results through to standardisation bodies.

As a three-year support action the consortium brings together the officially recognised European Standards Organisations (CEN, CENELEC and ETSI) together with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The project is timely as the fast moving world of ICT requires close links between research and standardisation, to improve access to markets and ensure interoperability.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

COPRAS website, available at:

<http://www.w3.org/2004/copras/>

A new source of material for plastic packaging

The WHEYPOL project, now nearing the end of three years of EC support, has been looking into ways of replacing conventional packaging with biodegradable polyesters originating from whey. Whey is the watery liquid produced as a by-product in cheese manufacture. Around 70 per cent of the 50 million tonnes produced per year in Europe, is processed mostly for food and animal feed, with the remainder discharged unregulated. Making the most of this abundant natural material would be one encouraging move away from only using around ten per cent of raw materials from renewable resources towards Barcelona objectives of sustainable development.

The project has developed an integrated industrial process for microbial mediated synthesis of polyhydroxyalkanoates (PHAs), these are biodegradable polyesters and could replace conventional packaging. Neither the production nor use should therefore have any negative impact on the environment. The economic opportunity is clear as the PHAs produced are of comparable quality to those conventionally manufactured, although the main issue now is cost reduction and upscaling the production process. Other environmental and biomedical applications, through blending the materials, are also being considered.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Project details, available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/industrial_technologies/22-03-04_pro_wheypol_en.html

Improving the organic food chain

A new project supported by the EC Framework Programme will seek to improve the quality, safety and productivity of organic food supply chains across Europe. Under the "Food Quality and Safety" priority, the project called "QualityLowInputFood" will receive some €18 million of support over five years from the EC. The research will cover all aspects of the food chain from production to consumption of protected crops, field vegetables, fruit, cereal, dairy and poultry goods. According to the consortium there is a current gap in meaningful information regarding productions systems' impact on nutritional value, taste and safety of organic food. This is one way in which it is hoped that organic foods could be made more competitive, making the consumer better informed at the same time.

Current consumer attitudes appear to favour foodstuffs whose production does not harm the environment. Organic farming faces a struggle however, to meet customer demands for high quality, affordable produce. Starting with an evaluation of customer expectations, in a second phase comparisons will be made into low input or organic foods and conventional foods to reveal a range of data, including nutritional and safety information.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Project website, available at:

<http://www qlif.org/>

EC website on the "Food Quality and Safety" Thematic Priority, available at:

<http://www.cordis.lu/food/home.html>

Investigating genetic factors behind depression

The NEWMOOD project has been launched involving 13 laboratories across Europe. Three of these are from new Member States; Estonia, Hungary and Poland. With around €7.3 million of EC support over the next five years, the project is supported under the "Life Sciences, Genomics and Biotechnology for Health" Thematic Priority. By looking at mouse and rat models, the group will hope to identify the genes in humans which cause depression. The hope is that this will lead to new approaches for drug treatment, diagnosis and understanding.

Current anti-depressant drugs have changed little over the past 30 years, can take weeks to have an effect and this only in around half of the patients affected. Looking at a wide range of genes, which may have very different purposes, and by identifying the genes related to depression, the partners will then hope to alter the activity of the genes in genetically modified mice to test their effects. It is estimated that around 120 million people around the world suffer from depression.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC website on the "Life Sciences, Genomics and Biotechnology for Health" Thematic Priority, available at:

<http://www.cordis.lu/lifescihealth/home.html>

Diving may plumb new depths thanks to science

Original research from Norway, combined with studies in Croatia may mean that divers may soon be able to reduce the risk of contracting the bends. It is hoped that a simple pill could mean that longer stays underwater could be possible, with less time spent on making decompression stops at the ends of the dives. Tests conducted show that divers who had undergone intensive exercise the day before a dive had lower levels of micro bubbles of Nitrogen in their blood after dives, which implies a lower risk of the bends.

There is still a way to go in finding a practical solution, and the researchers themselves warn against jumping to conclusions. Subsequent tests conducted in Norway appear to show that a Nitric Oxide, a stimulant released during exercise, decreases the formation of bubbles, and has been tested in drug form. The findings represent one of the most important discoveries in diving, although some are sceptical of the link between NO and the micro bubbles. The findings appear in the Journal of Physiology publication.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Issue 555 of the Journal of Physiology, available at:

<http://jp.physoc.org/content/vol555/issue1/index.shtml>

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CULTURE

More Erasmus students and teachers for 2002/03

The EC analysis of the Socrates-Erasmus National Agency reports for 2002/03 shows a seven per cent increase in the number of Erasmus students (with similar figures for teachers) compared to the previous academic year. This is the highest proportional increase since 1999/2000. The seven per cent figure represents an average across the

participating states (all Member States, Associated States, EFTA/EEA and candidate countries). It hides a 5.2 per cent increase in the current Member State and EFTA/EEA countries, 20 per cent in the acceding countries but a decline in UK, the Netherlands and Ireland.

Despite this decline in growth, the UK, Ireland and Sweden are the biggest net importers of students, whilst Germany and France are the biggest net importers of teachers. The highest increase in outgoing students is from Germany (11 per cent) Portugal (12 per cent) and Luxembourg (14 per cent). There are no significant changes in subject areas for either students or teachers. Business management and social sciences remain the most popular disciplines for Erasmus students, whilst languages and philological sciences remain the most popular disciplines for Erasmus teachers.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/04/394 of 2 March 2004, available at:
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh>

Higher education co-operation with Australia and New Zealand

The EC expects high levels of interest for the third EU-Australia and the first EU-New Zealand Pilot Co-operation Programme in Higher Education. The programmes' objective is to set up institutional co-operation at post-graduate level (Masters), focusing on international curriculum development and student mobility. This will be achieved through the development of higher education institution consortia between the EU and Australia, and between the EU and New Zealand. The Consortia will develop a joint study programme that will allow students to do part of their studies abroad.

The programmes are concrete follow-ups of the EU-Australia Joint Declaration of 1997 and the EU-New Zealand Joint Declaration in 1999, promoting closer political ties, also within higher education co-operation. In participating in the programmes, students will benefit from having an added 'international' curriculum and cultural dimension to their studies.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Details on the EU – Australia pilot programme, available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/calls/australia/australia_en.html

Details on the EU – New Zealand pilot programme, available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/calls/newzealand/newzealand_en.html

EXTERNAL COLLABORATION

Admission of Third-Country researchers in the EU

On 30 March 2004 the Justice and Home Affairs Council discussed the EC proposals for a directive and two recommendations on the admission of third-country nationals to carry out scientific research in the European Community.

The Council agreed that its preparatory bodies would examine the proposals with a view to adopting them as soon as possible. The proposal is part of the Lisbon strategy of increasing the number of active researchers in the EU. The proposal aims to facilitate

access and make the EU a more attractive location for third country researchers.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting report, available at:

<http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/makeFrame.asp?MAX=1&BID=86&DID=79760&LANG=1&File=/pressData/en/jha/79760.pdf&Picture=0>

Worries over EU science in an enlarged EU

At a conference held on 15 April in Slovenia on “Science and Society in an enlarged EU”, representatives from the ten accession countries were given the chance to put forward their opinion on the effect of enlargement on their domestic science environments. The attendees were given the chance to look at the scientific challenges from a significantly different viewpoint to that of the member states, and to communicate their concerns to representatives from the EC. The President of the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences expressed concern that while Slovenia could meet EU average levels in some criteria, the EU average on the whole was not that good, referring specifically to the fact that, with the exception of the UK, no EU Universities are ranked in the world's top 20.

Other speakers voiced their worries about the current focus of research support, that it is too centred on applied science, and they welcomed efforts to establish a European Research Council to even the balance between basic and applied research. Some attendees also warned of the possible brain drain from the new EU states, with scientists leaving after initial training never to return and help home country progress. Others were more optimistic about this issue, pointing to existing collaborations with current member states and looked forward to a two-way exchange of scientists.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Conference website, available at:

<http://www.ff.uni-lj.si/asrlo/confsciencesloparl/confsciencesloparl.htm>

EC in Moscow on the eve of EU enlargement

A delegation of European Commissioners headed by President Prodi is holding discussions with President Putin and the Russian government in Moscow on the eve of the EU eastern enlargement. Discussions will primarily focus on the establishment of a series of EU/Russia common spaces, as agreed at the St. Petersburg Summit in June 2003 , and on the launch of the EU/Russia Permanent Partnership Councils, which will bring together the EU Troika of Ministers and Russia on all key matters of mutual interest.

The EC will propose that work is intensified to effectively build a common economic space (including and with specific reference to environment and energy); a common space of freedom, security and justice; a common space of co-operation in the field of external security; and a common space of research and education, including cultural aspects. The objective is to agree the principal means to create the four common spaces at the EU/Russia Summit on 21 May 2004. In the context of work to create a common space of research and education, including culture, the EC will call for stepped-up co-operation on science and technology, education and culture, including Russian participation in EU education exchange programmes.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press Release number IP/04/514 of 21 April 2004, available at:

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

Stabilisation process in Western Balkans and new partnerships

The EC has produced its third annual report on its assessment of the progress made in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo. The report is of great significance to the potential for future EU membership. The EC will respond separately to Croatia's application in its communication to the European Partnership for Croatia.

The report comes in three sections: Progress made during the year, working papers per country and the EC identification of short and medium term priorities for each country under the first European Partnerships which have also just been launched (30 March 2004). Assessments look at political aspects, institutional and economic situations, trade measures with the EU, regional priorities, implementation of reforms and references to previous recommendations. The first European Partnerships for these countries are inspired by the same partnerships which prepared the candidate countries for EU membership. The EC has observed progress in many sectors, but transition to market economies and to functioning democracies has been slower than hoped for, especially with continuing problems in the region regarding attempts for reconciliation.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press release number IP/04/407 of 30 March 2004, available at:

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

Third Annual Report, available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/sap/rep3/strat_pap.pdf

EVENTS and AWARDS

Journalism and science to meet

As society is demanding more information about science and how it will affect our future, the European Initiative for Communicators of Science (EICOS) is holding its eleventh annual event, giving journalists a chance to see science first hand. The hands-on event will run from 5 to 12 June in Goettingen, Germany and focuses on molecular biology and its wider impact on society. More than just a lab-oriented event, the eight days of the workshop will be a chance for contact building and to counter public mistrust.

Deadlines for applications to attend the workshop have now passed, but there are already plans for a twelfth event next year. The event will be in English and is intended for those journalists with little scientific background. The journalists and scientists will work on actual projects in the lab and then meet outside to discuss issues of public understanding of science.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EICOS website, available at:

<http://www.eicos.mpg.de/1.php>

Latest technologies in the fight against childhood leukaemia

From 6 to 10 September 2004 an international conference will be held in London, UK covering the latest technologies available to combat childhood leukaemia. Participants will be given the opportunity to exchange ideas and experience on tackling this widespread terminal disease, which continues to rise year on year.

Participants will include medical and scientific experts from across a range of disciplines who will also discuss some of the factors which affect the incidence of leukaemia. Topics to be covered include epidemiology, genetic factors and pollutants in the environment, showing just how varied an approach will be taken.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Conference website, available at:

<http://www.leukaemiaconference.org>

Europe science and technology week

From 8 to 14 November 2004 will be Science Week Europe, a chance for national science week activities to be linked up and to showcase in particular how, on a day-to-day basis, science and technology can bring real improvements to our lives. This year promises more activities in European cities than ever before, and aims to bring the scientists and citizens closer together and enhance understanding.

Science Week is looking forward, not just in terms of the quest for knowledge but also in terms of the next generation of scientists and the future of science education. The week will include events at science museums, special lectures and exhibitions. While the EC European-level Science Week projects will have already been allocated funding, parallel activities organised subsequently may also participate under the same banner and have their event advertised on the Science Week website. The website has listings and links to current events and organisations.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Science Week website, available at:

<http://www.cordis.lu/scienceweek/home.htm>

Web inventor receives prestigious award

Sir Tim Berners-Lee has just received a prestigious award worth €1 million, when the Finnish Technology Award Foundation named him as the first winner of the Millennium Technology Prize. Back in 1991 he created a system to organise, link and browse pages which changed the internet forever. In 2003 he received a knighthood for his work.

It was while he was working at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland that he created the hypertext program to allow scientists to share research findings more easily across the web. Sir Tim never commercialised his work but continued work on the internet as a means of freedom of expression. He now works at MIT where he heads up the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Finnish Technology Award Foundation website, available at:

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

NEW PUBLICATIONS and ONLINE RESOURCES

New report on Europe's Human Resources for S&T

A high-level expert group on increasing Europe's human resources for science and technology, chaired by former Portuguese Science and Technology Minister Professor Jose Mariano Gago, has identified serious shortcomings that stand in the way of increasing the number of science professionals in Europe. The group, which has consulted nearly 300 key European institutions dealing with the shortage of skills in science, argues that European governments are failing to support the public sector, which suffers from inadequate resources, salaries and career prospects. This problem is compounded by the failure of Europe's universities to provide a wide range of skills required by a large diversity of science careers instead of focussing on preparations for academic careers only. The Group calls for a new partnership between universities and industry to promote careers and a better mutual understanding.

The brunt of the report, however, focuses on issues of school education. Science taught in schools, the group argues, is often detached from everyday life and work experience. Better links are needed with the real world of science. More hands-on experience is necessary especially in primary and secondary level courses, which should be designed to meet the needs and interests of young people.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The full report can be found at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2004/sciprof/index_en.html

Art and science in research

The March 2004 special edition of RTD Info, the EC quarterly magazine on research news and debate, highlights some current discussions and research on interactions between art and science. The foreword itself introduces the concept of art and science having a reciprocal relationship, and one that can also provide added value at a European level. Clearly there are similarities between the two fields in terms of examining our environment and attempting to explain or translate this understanding, but differences to take into account at the same time.

The special edition includes an examination of when and where interactions between the art and science take place, from many different points of view, including philosophical, technological, cultural, historical and biotechnological. As examples of some of these encounters, the magazine also includes a section on projects in cultural heritage; new efforts for its preservation and improved access.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

RTD Info special edition, available at:

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

Marie Curie vacancies and projects search tool

The new search tool for vacancies and projects within the Marie Curie host-driven schemes of FP6 is now available. The search tool will allow candidate fellows, researchers and academics to obtain information and to look for vacancies in projects funded as Research Training Networks, Early Stage Research Training, Transfer of Knowledge and Marie Curie Excellence Grants of FP6. The website also includes funding opportunities for attending conferences or training events, funded under the Marie Curie Conferences and Training Courses action.

The projects presented in these databases, which successfully responded to EC calls for proposals, have already been selected for EU funding. At present however, only the Research Training Networks and Conference schemes have been finalised and included here as yet. FP5 opportunities in Research Training Networks and High-level Scientific Conferences are also included. These versatile search engines let users search for opportunities using a wide range of parameters. They can search according to date, discipline, country, type of Marie Curie action, or using a free text term.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Marie Curie search tool, available at:

<http://mc-opportunities.cordis.lu/>

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 EU 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 EU 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 EU 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

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 Co-operation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research is a framework for scientific and technical co-operation, allowing the co-ordination 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 2000/04 (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	<p>eEurope</p> <p>A political initiative of the EC to allow Europe to benefit fully from the Information Society.</p> <p>http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/eeurope/documentation/index_en.htm</p>
EP	<p>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.</p> <p>http://www.europarl.eu.int/sg/tree/en/default.htm</p>
ERA	<p>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 co-ordinated.</p> <p>http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/area.html</p>
ESC	<p>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.</p> <p>http://www.ces.eu.int</p> <p>Press Releases:</p> <p>http://www.ces.eu.int/en/acs/fr_acs_press_rels.htm</p>
ESF	<p>European Science Foundation.</p> <p>http://www.esf.org</p>
ESF	<p>The European Social Fund</p> <p>http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/esf/en/index.htm</p>
Eureka	<p>Eureka is a Europe-wide network for Industrial Research and Development.</p> <p>http://www3.eureka.be/Home</p>
FQS	<p>Food Quality and Safety Priority (FP6)</p> <p>http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm</p>
FP (FP5, FP6, FP7)	<p>The EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. The Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) was adopted in 1998 and ran until 2002, with FP6 superseding until 2006, with discussions underway on FP7 beyond 2006.</p> <p>Further information on the thematic and horizontal programme composition of FP6 is available at</p> <p>http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/home.cfm</p>
GBH	<p>Genomics and Biotechnology for Health Priority (FP6)</p> <p>http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm</p>
Green Paper	<p>Green Papers are communications published by the European Commission on a specific policy area. Primarily they are</p>

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 co-operation 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
JRC	The EC's Joint Research Centre acting as a scientific and technological laboratory in support of EU policies, with a range of institutes and research activities. http://www.jrc.cec.eu.int
MEDIA	The MEDIA Plus Programme (2001–05) is to be introduced as a follow-up to the Media II programme which ended 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 co-operation 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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