
News on EU Research Policy and Programmes

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EU POLICY

Parliament feedback on the future of EU research funding

The EP heard its first report on the EC plans for the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) this month.

At a meeting of the EP Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), Italian MEP, Pia Eida Locatelli presented her working document in response to the EC communication 'Science and Technology, the key to Europe's future - Guidelines for future EU policy to support research'. Her report supports the objective of the development of a European Research Area (ERA), and the requested doubling of budget for the Framework Programme for further efforts in creating the ERA. Furthermore, the document supports the key findings of the Marimon report (a mid term review of the new instruments to FP6) in that there should be continuity between FP6 and FP7 instruments. With regard to the six axes of activity highlighted by the EC, her report highlights the priorities as being: a European Research Council type mechanism to stimulate competition within Europe and strengthen ERA, an increased budget for human resources and mobility activities to address the need for 700,000 new researchers to meet the Lisbon goal and an increased focus on technology transfer.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EP working document available from the EP website at:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/DT/544/544382/544382en.pdf

EC Communication on EC, Europa website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/future/pdf/com-2004-353_en.pdf

Potočnik speaks on public participation for the future of research

In his opening speech of the Descartes Prize Ceremony on 2 December, Commissioner Janez Potočnik emphasised that, just as European citizens are required to increase investment in research as a percentage of GDP, it must be ensured that the public as a whole is better to contribute to the world of science.

The new €250 thousand Descartes prize for science communication will play an essential part in encouraging public participation. The prize complements the existing Descartes prize for excellence in collaborative scientific research. Mr Potočnik believes that scientific and technical culture must be widened through all media and highlighted that the EC actively encourages and supports research groups to better disseminate information to the public on their Community-supported projects. In particular, the public's contribution to

scientific debate should be encouraged at all stages of policy development. <http://www.cordis.lu/science-society/descartes/prize2004.htm>

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Further information on the Descartes prizes, available at:

<http://www.cordis.lu/science-society/descartes/prize2004.htm> Mr Potočnik's speech available from the EC, Europa website at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/pdf/descartes_comm_speech_en.pdf

Declining EU industrial research and development (R&D) spend

Recent data is causing concern in relation to the EU research investment action plan, which aims to raise R&D spending to three per cent of GDP. Whilst the top 500 EU companies investing spent a combined €101 billion on research in 2003, this was lower than the figure in 2002. Interestingly, this figure is also lower than the increased investments made by leading non-EU companies.

These findings were highlighted by the first EU Industrial Research Investment Scoreboard, published this month. Figures in the scoreboard are taken from the EU's major R&D investing businesses, irrespective of where the research is carried out. Reasons for the decline in European research spending may include that 12 of the top 25 companies actually reduced their R&D budgets last year. However, whilst some of the biggest R&D spenders in Europe, Daimler Chrysler, Siemens, Volkswagen, Nokia and Glaxo Smith Kline are continuing to invest significantly in research (with all five appearing in the list of top 12 global companies for R&D investment), after these larger companies, the EU500 list shows a steep fall-off in research spending, when compared to the non-EU list. The four largest EU sectors in terms of research spending are automobiles and parts, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, IT hardware, and electronics and electrical equipment and there is a concentration of research-intensive companies in the EU's largest economies, with enterprises based in Germany, France and the UK together accounting for 74 per cent of the EU500 R&D investment.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Cordis website at: http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi-bin/srchidadb?CALLER=NHP_EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23060

Potočnik's view of Technology Platforms

Janez Potočnik made a speech on 'Technology Platforms: champions to leverage knowledge for economic growth' to an audience of Industrial Leaders of Technology Platforms this month. During the speech he called for participants of Technology Platforms to sign up to a voluntary code of practice on openness and transparency.

The Commissioner for Science and Research started his speech by stating the importance of knowledge as a factor of growth. He explained that knowledge is the EU main, if not only, factor of competitiveness in a globalising economy. He then advocated, as he had already done in front of other audiences, the need to reinforce the 'knowledge triangle of

education, research and innovation' by creating adequate conditions to promote the knowledge economy. He then went on to the subject of technology platforms as such. He underlined that, since he has taken on his new role, one of the main messages he has been getting from industrialists is that the EU urgently needs to create better synergy between European and national investments, and between public and private efforts. Technology platforms represent a powerful tool to overcome this, as they unite all relevant stakeholders (industry, the research community and public authorities at different levels as well as the financial community, regulators, consumers and wider civil society) in addressing a particular technological challenge.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Cordis website at:http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi-bin/srchidadb?CALLER=NHP_EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23082

Busquin to head STOA

Former EU Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin has been elected as Chairman of the EP's Scientific and Technology Options Assessment (STOA) panel.

Mr Busquin will head the fifteen member panel and the three member bureau within the panel. The panel carries the political responsibility for STOA's work and decides on all of STOA's activities.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/stoa/default_en.htm

Increases in EU patent filing expected

The European Patent Office (EPO) has indicated that it expects a record number of approximately 180,000 patent applications this year. Mr Alain Pompidou, the President of the European Patent Office, spoke at the recent EPO conference highlighting the 'growth of the patent system required for management of technological knowledge to innovation and from innovation to the market place'. Supporting European enterprises and, consequently, the innovation process in the EU, the EPO contributes to the achievement of the Lisbon Agenda which aims for the EU to become a knowledge-based society and the most competitive economy in the world by 2010.

This year's European Patent Office(s) (EPO) conference focused on the role of patents in the innovation process in Europe and the dynamic development of a European patent system (e.g. in terms of increasing the number of patent applications). Delegates also discussed patent protection in the area of information technology. Mr Pompidou also stated that in order to manage the patent flow, the EPO had to utilize high-quality business tools, such as the EPO digital business interface (epoline~), to deal with such high demand effectively.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Cordis website at: http://dbs.cordis.lu/cordis-cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=209892004-12-14&DOC=12&TBL=EN_RT&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:2608&CALLER=CORDISwire

EESC position on industrial policy

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) calls for a 'new style' industrial policy, which should be taken into account in the Mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy in March 2005.

In its response to the EC communication on industrial policy, the EESC sets out principles for this new approach. The EESC fully endorses EC proposals for three strategic axes in which the following are featured: better law-making, an integrated approach at EU level, more effective coordination between the EU level and national policies and sectoral policies with specific measures. The EESC encourages ongoing consultations with the business sectors, removal of non-trade barriers, research and development, trade and a more targeted human resources management. The EESC also supports the setting-up of technology platforms to help create new private-private or public-private partnerships, for example between universities, research centres and businesses. Finally, the EESC also calls for improved coordination not only within the Commission, but also in the Competitiveness Council and it is in favour of a joint EU-middle term action plan.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EESC press releases on the EESC website at: <http://www.esc.eu.int/press/cp/docs/industry>

EC action plan on freedom, security and justice

In recent years the EU has increased its role in securing police, customs and judicial cooperation and in developing a coordinated policy with regard to asylum, immigration and external border controls. This development will continue with the firmer establishment of a common area of freedom, security and justice, with specific attention to growing issues of European significance, such as terrorism. The Council has therefore invited the Commission to present an Action Plan in 2005, to include concrete proposals and a timetable for their adoption and implementation. The Action Plan will be reviewed at yearly intervals.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Documents on the creation of the Action Plan are available from the EC, Europa website at: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/news/information_dossiers/2005-2009/documents_en.htm

Eurostat: new Director General

The EU has appointed Mr Günther Hanreich to the post of Director-General for Eurostat., the Statistical Office of the European Communities. Eurostat produces regular statistics on economic indicators such as inflation, employment and trade and also on general topics such as agriculture, the environment, population and social conditions.

Mr Hanreich was appointed by the Commission on 9 December 2004 on a proposal by Vice President Siim Kallas in charge of Administrative Affairs and Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner Joaquin Almunia, in agreement with Commission President José Manuel Barroso. Günther Hanreich was previously Director for Trans-European Networks at the Directorate General for Energy and Transport. He has been working at the Commission since 1996 and he previously was an Austrian government official. Mr Hanreich will take over from Michel Vanden Abeele who was appointed in May 2003.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Europa website, press release IP/04/1457 at:
<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/1457&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

New supercomputer

Eight European research institutes are linking four supercomputers to create one powerful megacomputer in a bid to boost Europe's competitiveness in scientific areas where extreme performance is needed. Connecting the four national supercomputing infrastructures at European level will greatly enhance the speed of complex scientific calculations and allow scientists to perform research that would otherwise have been impossible. The innovative strategy, called 'Distributed Infrastructure for Super Computing Applications' (DEISA), is partly funded by the EC under FP6.

The DEISAs powerful new megacomputer is expected to support a substantial number of research activities in different scientific sectors, such as material sciences, cosmology and astrophysics, plasma physics, life sciences, fusion oriented energy research, quantum chemistry, climate research and industrial computational fluid dynamics. Considered as a single machine, the new megacomputer will rank fourth in the world, behind the US Bluegene and Columbia, and Earth Simulator in Japan. It is expected to be ready by the middle of 2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

DEISA website at: <http://www.deisa.org/>

EU drugs strategy 2005-12

The European Council of Ministers has agreed a new Drugs strategy for 2005-12. The strategy will entail two successive four-year action plans and the EC currently preparing a communication on the first of these (an action plan for 2005 to 2008). The plan will aim to significantly reduce the prevalence of drug use among the EU population in addition to reducing the social harm and health damage caused by the use of, and trade in, drugs. The plan will also seek to tackle both demand and supply issues.

The EC will also take into account an evaluation of the previous action plan and strategy (2000-2004) in which the following objectives are given: significant reduction (over five years) in the prevalence of drug use and new recruitment to it, in addition to reduction of incidence in drug-related health damage and death, significant reduction in the availability of illicit drugs and the number of drug-related crimes, significant reduction in money laundering and the illicit trafficking of drug precursors. The strategy also aims to significantly increase the number of successfully treated addicts.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

General information from the EC, Freedom, security and Justice website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/news/information_dossiers/council_16_12_2004/drugs_en.htm , press release available from EC, Europa website at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=PRES/04/321&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> and information on the 2000 to 2004 Drugs

Action Plan on the EC, Europa website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/fsj/drugs/antidrugs/wai/fsj_drugs_action_plan_en.htm

Director nominated for the European centre for disease prevention and control

Mrs Zsuzsanna Jakab, currently the senior civil servant at Hungary's Ministry of Health, has been nominated as Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

The ECDC is a new EU agency designed to strengthen Europe's defences against epidemics. The nomination of Mrs Jakab was made on 13 December 2004, at a meeting of the ECDCs Management Board in Stockholm, seat of the new agency. Mrs Jakab will appear before the EPs Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee early in 2005. Once the appointment is confirmed, the Director can begin recruiting staff for the Centre and establishing its Europe-wide network of disease control experts.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press release at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/04/297&type=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Further information on the ECDC and its role on the EC, Europa website at:

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

New life sciences funding forum

At a conference in Brussels on 13 December, the EC launched a 'funders forum' in the field of the life sciences, considering all areas of plant, animal and human science. The aim of the forum is to better co-ordinate the national efforts of Europe's member states in this field, and their contribution toward the European Research Area (ERA).

Currently, around €30 billion are invested annually across Europe in the life sciences area; a figure approximately equal to that spent in the United States. However, each of the 25

member states has their own national funding priorities, as does every charity, industrial and other funding organisation. It is hoped that this fragmentation may be overcome by bringing these funders together in one arena to better co-ordinate research efforts in the future.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC press release, available from the Europa website at:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/press/2004/pr1312en.cfm>

Galileo set to go!

The EU satellite navigation system is even closer to reality this month after the Transport Council gave its approval to initiation of the construction phase of the project. Consequently, the Community can expect to see the first satellites launched at the end of 2005. The decision has been considered one of real importance, especially when considering the increasing requirement for satellite location technologies (e.g. in cars). Galileo should enable Europe both to fully embrace current developments and ready itself for future applications in this area. Galileo should offer a number of services including a commercial service, a safety of life service, a search and rescue service and a governmental service. According to EU Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot, 'Galileo is without a doubt the most wonderful European technological project. We are now on the home straight,' 'Galileo will be as much of a technological revolution as mobile telephony. This venture shows how capable Europe is of making a united effort in pursuit of a common goal.'

However, Galileo must satisfy a number of conditions before the project can move ahead. These are primarily financial in nature and indicate that not only should the cost not become too great but that a fair division of public-private funding must also be guaranteed.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Cordis website at: http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi-bin/srchidadb?CALLER=NHP_EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23061 and General info on Galileo at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dqs/energy_transport/galileo/index_en.htm
<http://www.esa.int/export/esaSA/navigation.html>
<http://www.galileoju.com>

Natura 2000: new list of protected areas adopted

Atlantic and Continental lists under the Natura 2000 network have recently been adopted. The list cover 12 Member States, including the UK and features a large number of endangered animal and plant species and habitats such as the Wolf, the Otter, the Salmon, coastal lagoons, heath and grasslands and several types of forest and river systems.

The Natura 200 network is set up under the EU Habitats Directive to safeguard Europe's most important wildlife areas and species. Being part of Natura 2000 means that the selected areas benefit from increased protection as set out in the Directive. The lists of sites foreseen in the Directive are divided up into seven bio-geographic regions within the

territory of the Union. The lists for the Macaronesian and Alpine regions have already been adopted. The next step towards the completion on the Natura 2000 network will be the adoption of two more lists of sites (Boreal and Mediterranean bio-geographical regions) and the establishments of the Natura 2000 Network in the new Member States.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For more information on Natura 2000 and on the lists, visit the EC, Europa website at:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/home.htm>

Air Pollution: The EC wants your views

The EC is currently in the process of developing a plan for improving the quality of Europe's air. Since the plan is to ascertain measures which have a direct impact on the populations day-to day life (including the way we move, produce and use energy and the air quality we want), a consultation has been organised to seek input from the public on measures to be used for reducing air pollution.

The consultation started on 1st December 2004 and will be available until 31 January 2005. The results will be published in March 2005. The results of the consultation will subsequently be taken into account in preparing a new comprehensive action plan to reduce air pollution. The action plan is expected to be ready by mid-2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Europa website at: <http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/forms/dispatch?form=356&lang=EN>

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) priorities

The last plenary session of 2004 took place on 15 and 16 December. The EESC priorities for the next two years were outlined by the new President, Anne-Marie Sigmund. Some core objectives were restated, including competitiveness, growth, fighting poverty and exclusion, and enhancing social, territorial and economic cohesion. However, it was made clear that the EESC needs to do more to promote its role with the public, improve transparency of operations and to demonstrate aim to be the 'institutional guardian of participatory democracy'. In a related objective, the EESC will also play a key role in the 'Communicating Europe' campaign.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is a non-political body that gives representatives of Europe's socio-occupational interest groups, and others, a formal platform to express their points of views on EU issues. Its opinions are forwarded to the larger institutions - the Council, the Commission and the EP. It thus has a key role to play in the EUs decision-making process.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EESC website, available at: <http://www.esc.eu.int/pages/en/home.asp>

Still no home for ITER

After talks at the International Atomic Agency in Vienna, both Cadarache (France) and Rokkasho-mura (Japan) remain equal candidates for hosting the world's first International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER). Prior to the talks, the EU was optimistic that a deal could be reached, favouring the EU location. It had even threatened to go ahead alone if no deal were to be reached during the talks the EU had with the United States, Japan, Russia, China and South Korea. After the meeting, however, the Commission was careful to tone down such threats. Fabio Fabbi, European spokesman said 'There was no agreement but there was no breakdown either. On the contrary, we have done good work and made good progress'. He also commented 'The two countries least enthusiastic about the European option, although not 'warm' toward the idea were not any longer firmly against it'. It is, however, still not known as yet when this deadlock will be resolved.

FURTHER

The Joint Assessment of the four initial candidate sites, known as Joint Assessment of Specific Sites (JASS) report at: <http://www.iter.org/ITERPublic/ITER/JASSfinal.pdf>
Information on the selection process on the ITER website at: <http://www.iter.org/ITERPublic/ITER/site.html>.

INFORMATION:

RESEARCH NEWS

Switzerland backs stem cell research

Following the world's first national referendum, two-thirds of Swiss voters approved a law to allow research on human embryonic stem cells. Swiss interior minister, Pascal Couchepin, said the result was a 'vote of confidence in research'. Both the Green party and an alliance of conservative Christian groups had campaigned for a no vote in the referendum. One Green MP, Maya Graff, felt that it was unethical that 'yes' campaigners had used the slogan 'Hope', to signify possible future cures for cancer and diabetes.

The new Swiss law is stricter than in some other European countries, including Britain, and banning the use of cells older than seven days. Further, the law prohibits therapeutic or human cloning, the creation of embryos exclusively for the purpose of stem cell research, and research on the human embryos themselves. The Swiss government argued that it needed to revise its legislation on stem cell research to maintain its biomedical excellence, particularly in relation to rival scientific centres in the UK.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The Guardian press release of 29 November 2004, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/life/news/story/0,12976,1361811,00.html> and the IPR Helpdesk news item of 9 December 2004, available from <http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org>

Nanotechnology survey indicates requirements for Europe's scientists

The results of an online survey on 'a European strategy for nanotechnology' illustrate the areas that Europe's researchers consider should be a priority. The survey was conducted by Nanoforum in collaboration with the EC. The results show a strong call for more European funding for the nanotechnologies, new infrastructure, increased nanotechnology education and training and both enhanced international co-operation and dialogue with society. An overwhelming 90 per cent of respondents felt that nanotechnology will have a strong impact on European industry within the next ten years, and 80 per cent thought an impact on European citizens was also probable.

Whilst a number of areas were considered a priority for EU research funding, 'nanotechnology for sensor applications', received the most votes at just over 16 per cent. However, some respondents selected all of the fields put forward. 'It is impossible to prioritise the R&D [research and development] issues,' said one respondent. 'If we are to be competitive, ALL these things have to be investigated in a balanced manner. Furthermore, neglecting some areas can have unpredictable influence on others,' wrote another.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Cordis website at: http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi-bin/srchidadb?CALLER=NHP_EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23099, results from the survey on the Nanoforum website at: <http://www.nanoforum.org/>

Animal health technology platform

As part of the Dutch presidency of the EU, three Directorates General of the EC have (jointly) launched a technology platform to define a common research agenda and mobilise resources on the theme "Global Animal Health". Led by industry, and coordinating the efforts of DGs Development, Research and Health and Consumer Protection, the initiative aims to tackle major animal diseases in the developing world and in Europe by bringing together veterinary pharmaceutical and small biotechnology companies, research institutions, the financial sector and regulatory authorities to address issues of animal health and welfare, food safety, human health, and market access.

Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner, Markos Kyprianou, said that tackling animal diseases effectively benefits society as a whole, creating significant economic, social, environmental and ethical gains', and that the technology platform would consider all aspects 'covering the whole chain, from innovation to delivery of new vaccines and tests.' Research Commissioner, Janez Potočnik noted the role of the technology platform in developing tools to prevent and control outbreaks of animal disease. The platform will strengthen efforts put in place following outbreaks of BSE and foot-and-mouth disease in recent years.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

DG Research press release available from the EC, Europa website at: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/press/2004/pr1612en.cfm>

Vegetation solution to environmental issues

Researchers at the ECs Joint Research Centre (JRC) have developed a new methodology that makes use of remote sensing data collected from satellite observation of the nature, state and evolution of the Earth's vegetation to determine the impact of major climatic and extreme weather events. Using the new method, scientists analysed the data leading up to, during and after the drought that affected most of western Europe in 2003. They discovered that signs of the phenomenon were detectable in the vegetation analysis for some regions of Europe as early as March of that year.

Developed and tested with a group of international partners, the method has been transmitted to the European Space Agency for implementation. It is hoped that the outputs of implementation may be used to persuade the European Environment Agency to adopt new indicators of environmental stress for monitoring. One of the young researchers involved in the project, Nadine Gobron, received the 2004 JRC award for best young scientist for what it describes as 'her outstanding scientific contribution'.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Information on the project is available from the JRC website at:

http://ies.jrc.cec.eu.int/Vegetation_productivity.120.0.html

and

<http://www-gvm.jrc.it/stars/fapar.htm>.

Olive oil for all

Olive oil is well established as beneficial for human health, especially on the cardiovascular system. It would therefore be of benefit to encourage those in non-Mediterranean European countries to increase consumption of this product. However, production and processing of olives has an enormous environmental impact in the production regions. This is due not only to the large amount of water required, but also the fact that the residues are difficult to dispose of or recycle. In response to this, the EC is aiming both to increase the consumption of olive oil across Europe and decrease the environmental impact associated with its production and processing through the recently funded project 'TDC-OLIVE'.

The partners working on 'TDC-OLIVE' are looking to create physical and virtual networks of Technology Dissemination Centres to disseminate information on the latest and environmentally friendly production methods with the aim of supporting enterprises in this sector. Most of the producing companies in Spain, Greece, Italy and Portugal are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and often need support. This project provides the potential for modernisation and R&D support to help these companies increase the food quality of their products, combined with looking at ways of decreasing the environmental impact of this production process.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC. Cordis website at: <http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi->

Who's for worming?!

Let's face it, who could ever call Endoscopy a pleasant experience? No matter how careful the medic or how small the apparatus, having a tube pushed inside is not something many people would wish to repeat.

In attempts to make things a little easier on the patient, the Commission has funded researchers studying the motion type techniques used by lower animal forms in attempts to develop endoscopy technology into equipment able to 'pull' itself into the internals as opposed to being 'pushed'. The BIOLOCH IST project studies the paddleworm, capable of swimming with ease through relatively soft, unstructured environments and which moves in wet environments containing large amounts of solid and semi-solid material, as a model for an endoscope-type instrument. Researchers firstly had to study locomotion mechanisms used by the paddleworm and then apply this knowledge to design of mini and micro machines. The BIOLOCH IST prototype consists of a simple worm with a flexible central spine and paddles sticking out either side along the worm's body which should be able to move inside internal tubes. The researcher's final aim is to end up with something akin to a robotic motor based on the paddleworm design. The early prototype can be seen at an exhibition on biomimetics at the Zoological Museum in Copenhagen, Denmark, which continues until early 2005

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Cordis website at: http://dbs.cordis.lu/cordis-cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=209892004-12-14&DOC=19&TBL=EN_RTDN&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:2598&CALLER=CORDISwire

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CULTURE

Maastricht communication on vocational training

A conference, organised by the Dutch presidency of the EU and the EC on the future priorities of Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) gathered ministers from 32 European Countries, European social Partners and the EC.

Participants to the conference agreed on a communication (released this month) setting out new priorities and strategies in vocational education and training for the next two years. The document updates the Copenhagen Declaration (adopted in 2002) and is to be seen in the context of the "Education and Training 2010" work programme. A number of key areas are highlighted: addressing the image and attractiveness of the vocational education route (for employers and also individuals), achieving high levels of quality and innovation in VET systems, linking VET with the labour market requirements of the knowledge economy and,

especially, the upgrading and competence development of older workers and the need of low-skilled and disadvantaged groups for the purpose of achieving social cohesion and increasing labour market participation,

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The communication (Maastricht communiqué) is available from the EC, Europa website at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html

233 European cultural project grants from Culture 2000

233 projects have been offered grants under the culture 2000 programme this year. Out of the 233 projects, 113 concern cultural heritage which has been the priority for 2004. For 2005-06, the programme will support projects in all artistic and cultural fields without a sector priority.

This year, the EC proposed a new cultural co-operation programme for the period 2007-2013 concentrating on three priorities: mobility of artists and cultural workers and mobility of works, intercultural dialogue. A little over €400 million was been proposed for this new programme.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

More information on the funded projects and on Culture 2000 programme can be found at http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/index_en.html

EXTERNAL COLLABORATION

EU and Russia to collaborate in research, education and culture

The EU and Russia recently confirmed their commitment toward strengthening their strategic partnership. The commitment was originally made at the St Petersburg Summit in May 2003, during which it was agreed to reinforce co-operation in four specific fields (or 'spaces'. These fields were a central point on the agenda of the EU/Russia summit that was held in The Hague on 25 November 2004:

- Economic space
- Common space of freedom, security and justice
- Common space of cooperation in the field of external security
- A common space on research, education, and culture.

The latter space is designed to reinforce people-to-people contacts and to contribute to increasing the competitiveness of the EU and Russian economies. The EU and Russia

already have good co-operation on research as shown by the renewal of the Science and Technology co-operation agreement in 2003, and the adoption, in 2002, of the Action Plan to enhance Science and Technology co-operation opportunities for the participation of Russian scientists and researchers in EU-funded activities which has been extended via the 6th Research and Development framework.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Cordis website at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/04/268&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

More science for Africa

The international community is urged to strengthen scientific and technological capacity in Africa and the developing world in general. The statement came from the World Bank's vice-president for Africa Mr Gobind Nankani who highlights that this is an important issue. In addition, he states that poor nations must try to identify areas in which the international community could get involved to encourage their scientific and technological activities.

In an interview with SciDev Net, Mr Nankani states that rich countries must increase their support in order to accelerate the economic growth of less developed countries and boost their capacity to find 'home-grown' solutions to their problems. Whilst development assistance to poor countries adds up to around €43 billion a year, with approximately €15 billion going toward technical assistance, Mr Nankani determines that 'If a large chunk of this could go to scholarships, it would make a tremendous contribution to capacity building and, thus, a formidable expert base', with increased research capacity in the universities of developing countries potentially contributing to strengthened health systems and improved agriculture. Increased research capacity could also contribute toward better tackling of disease.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Cordis website at: [http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi-](http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi-bin/srclidadb?CALLER=NHP_EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23095)

[bin/srclidadb?CALLER=NHP_EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23095](http://dbs.cordis.lu/cgi-bin/srclidadb?CALLER=NHP_EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23095), details on SciDev Net at the SciDev Net website at:

<http://www.scidev.net/dossiers/index.cfm?fuseaction=dossierItem&Dossier=11&CFID=5318830&CFTOKEN=5b7b021947d481e6-6A04A729-B0D0-F03F-7362E531192597A2>

€2.6 million for EU-US and EU-Canada co-operation in education

Nineteen new projects, involving 117 institutions, have been selected to participate in the 9th edition of the EU/US and EU/Canada co-operation programmes in higher education and vocational education and training. The projects are funded jointly by the European Community and authorities in the United States and Canada for a total of three years. The objective is to set up institutional co-operation at graduate and post-graduate level, focusing on international curriculum development and student mobility.

The selected projects involve around 60 EU universities and vocational training institutions with equal numbers of US and Canadian groups. Some highlights from the projects include: renewable resources and clean technology (in respect of economical sustainable development), e-learning and simulation networks, agriculture technology development and food safety.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Europa website at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/04/1402&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>, information on EU-US collaboration in education from the EC, Europa website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/eu-usa/index_en.html and information on EU-Canada collaboration in education from the EC, Europa website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/eu-canada/index_en.html

EVENTS and AWARDS

Conference on globalisation, new economy and the environment

The Seventh International Conference of the Russian Society for Ecological Economics (ISEE) is due to take place 23-25 June 2005 at the State University in Saint Petersburg, Russia. The conference is focused on 'Globalisation, New Economy and the Environment' with specific focus on business and Society Challenges for Sustainable Development'. The conference is a good opportunity for discussion on ecological economic approaches to environmentally sustainable policy making and for making links with many scientists across geographical and disciplinary boundaries. Particular emphasis will be placed on international and regional environmental problems, the importance of the protection of the Baltic Region, application of the new methodological approaches of ecological economics and the role of information sciences and modelling in environmental-economic management.

Topics featured at the conference include: methodological aspects of ecological economics, international environmental policy and law, global environmental problems, environmental psychology and ethics, natural resources management, macroeconomics and the environment, governance and institutional aspects of sustainability reform and business and sustainable development. Early submission of abstracts is called for by 15 January 2005 and full papers must be submitted by 15 April 2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC, Cordis website at: [http://dbs.cordis.lu/cordis-](http://dbs.cordis.lu/cordis-cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=209892004-12-14&DOC=2&TBL=EN RTDN&RCN=EN RCN_ID:2621&CALLER=CORDISwire)

[cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=209892004-12-](http://dbs.cordis.lu/cordis-cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=209892004-12-14&DOC=2&TBL=EN RTDN&RCN=EN RCN_ID:2621&CALLER=CORDISwire)

[14&DOC=2&TBL=EN RTDN&RCN=EN RCN_ID:2621&CALLER=CORDISwire](http://dbs.cordis.lu/cordis-cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=209892004-12-14&DOC=2&TBL=EN RTDN&RCN=EN RCN_ID:2621&CALLER=CORDISwire), venue

details, Saint Petersburg State University website at: <http://www.spbu.ru>

Science and society forum 2005

This EC organized event will be held from 9 to 11 March 2005 in Brussels. The Forum is part of Commission efforts in recent years to engage the scientific community and society at large on debate into key societal, scientific and economic issues. Several showcases will be featured to demonstrate current efforts in the popularization of science, public debate and examples of how various groups in society are being addressed. A set of national mirror events has also been established, one of which (in Sweden), has already taken place.

The Forum will review the progress of these efforts and look to establish the way forward with a Charter on the Future of Science and Society. Four main themes will be explored at the Forum including: science, society and the Lisbon Strategy, science, technology and democracy, towards a culture of communication of science in society and fostering diversity and inclusiveness in research. Policy makers, opinion leaders, scientists and the public at large are all invited to participate.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Further information on the forum , together with registration details can be found on the Science and Society Forum website, available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2005/forum2005/index_en.htm

NEW PUBLICATIONS and ONLINE RESOURCES

Energy and transport: figures and facts

The 2004 edition of the statistical pocketbook "EU Energy and Transport in Figures" is now available. Where available, data from the 10 countries which joined the EU in 2004 have been added to the tables of this edition.

The main aim of the pocket book is to provide energy and transport statistics for the Member States of the EU and other European countries (the countries that have applied to join the EU and the countries of the European Free Trade Association) in a user-friendly way.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dqs/energy_transport/figures/pocketbook/2004_en.htm

The future impact of ICTs on environmental sustainability

This report presents the results of a research project commissioned by The Institute for Prospective Technological Studies. The Institute is one of the seven scientific institutes of the ECs Joint Research Centre (JRC) and it was set up in 1994 to focus on analysing the links between technology, the economy and society. The main aim of the institute is to provide European policy makers with techno-economic analysis to support the policy-making process and its work focuses on monitoring and analysing science and technology developments together with the impact they have on society and the economy. This recent report results from investigation into the possible effects of information Communication technologies (ICT) on a set of environmental indicators in 2020.

The project adopted an innovative methodology combining qualitative scenario-building and quantitative modeling. The general conclusion was that the impact of ICT is roughly between -20 and +30%. Therefore, there are significant opportunities for improving environmental sustainability through ICTs. ICT should accordingly be taken into account by environmental policies in order to ensure that ICT applications make a positive contribution to environmental outcomes, and, at the same time, to suppress rebound effects.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For the full report see the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies website at:
<http://www.jrc.es/home/publications/publication.cfm?pub=1208>

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/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 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	eEurope A political initiative of the EC to allow Europe to benefit fully from the Information Society. http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/information_society/eeurope/documentation/index_en.htm
EP	The European Parliament - which is made up of elected representatives (MEPs) from all the Member States. It shares decision-making power with the Council in a number of areas including research and education. http://www.europarl.eu.int/sq/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 co-ordinated. 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, FP7)	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. Further information on the thematic and horizontal programme composition of FP6 is available at http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/home.cfm
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 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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