
News on EU Research Policy and Programmes

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EU POLICY

Luxembourg Presidency priorities

Luxembourg takes over the Presidency of the EU and European Council in spring 2005. In preparation for this, the Luxembourg Government has announced that promoting and attracting the best scientists to the EU is a main priority. In addition, Luxembourg intends to enhance focus on the creation of the European Research Area (ERA); look into promoting enhanced investment into research and development (R&D); as well as contributing to the debate on FP7 (since a lot of preparatory work will be necessary if FP7 is to be adopted in time). 'In the spirit of the Lisbon strategy and its mid-term evaluation, the Luxembourg Presidency wishes to actively support the developments introduced within the framework of the Barcelona objectives; as well as provide a sustained contribution to the deployment of the European Area for Research and Innovation', said a statement from the Luxembourg Ministry for Culture, Education and Research.

Nanotechnologies and European space and security policies will also be among its priorities and the Grand Duchy, in recognising the potential of nanotechnologies in contributing to the competitiveness of the European economy, states that it will encourage the strengthening of all actions in this field. With respect to a European space policy, Luxembourg suggests supporting the work aimed at defining and implementing a European space policy.'

FURTHER INFORMATION:

CORDIS website at:

http://dbs.cordis.lu/fepcqi/srchidadb?CALLER=FP6_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23122

Council call on Commission to make an early start with FP7

During a recent meeting of the EUs Competitiveness Council, the EC was urged to get an early start in laying down its vision for FP7. Framework Programmes are the EUs main instrument(s) for implementing the European Research Area (ERA) and thus helping the EU meet its Lisbon and Barcelona targets. The current Framework Programme (FP6) runs until 2006. However, discussion is now underway on FP7 with respect to its budget, structure and research priorities. During its meeting late last year, the Competitiveness Council was keen to discuss not only the future content of FP7 but also the Commissions timetable for presenting its vision.

With this as the backdrop, the Council was keen to discuss both the future content and the Commissions timetable for presenting its vision for FP7. Issues debated during the session included how to boost transnational collaborative research and make it more attractive to researchers. In addition, developing European-level research infrastructures and co-ordination of national research programmes and security and space research were

discussed. An online consultation on the possible research themes for FP7 closed at the end of 2004, and the results are expected to inform the ECs vision of the future of European research which can be expected sometime around April 2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Europa website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/headlines/news/article_05_01_03_en.html

Re-election of European Ombudsman

On 11 January 2005, the EP voted and re-elected Mr Nikiforos Diamandouros as European Ombudsman.

Mr Diamandouros was first elected as European Ombudsman in January 2003, following the retirement of the EUs first Ombudsman, Jacob Söderman. With the start of a new parliamentary term, a new election was organised. Mr Diamandouros' new mandate will run until 2009 and his priorities for the coming years are to: ensure that citizens' rights under EU law are respected at every level in the EU; make certain that the EU institutions and bodies conform to the highest standards of administration; and guarantee that his institution serves citizens in the most efficient and effective way possible.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

More details on the Ombudsman's priorities can be found in the Ombudsman's statement available from the EP website at:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/comparl/peti/election2004/candidates/nd_statement_en.pdf.

Further information on the election process can be found on the EP website at:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/comparl/peti/election2004/default_en.htm

New President of the European Court of Auditors

The Members of the European Court of Auditors recently elected Mr Hubert Weber on as the tenth President of the Court for 3 years. Mr Weber's term of office as president started on 16 January 2005. He has been a member of the Court of Auditors since March 1995. Since 2000, he was the Dean of Audit Group on External actions and responsible for the audit sector dealing with co-operation with developing and third countries.

The President's role is that of 'primus inter pares'. He is responsible for the effective and sound management of the Court's activities and represents the institution in its external relations, in particular with the other institutions of the EU and the supreme audit institutions of the Member States.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

European Court of Auditor press release referenced ECA/05/01 available at

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/searchAction.do>.

European Research Council Identification Committee

An Identification Committee to recommend members of the governing body of a future European Research Council (ERC) met this month.

The establishment of the European Research Council is to be included in the Commissions proposal for FP7. The current intention is that focus of the ERC should be on basic investigator-driven research and scientific excellence which is to be identified by fellow scientists rather than the Commission. An identification Committee has therefore been set up by the European Commissioner for Science and Research, Mr Janez Potočnik, for identification of potential members of a future ERC governing body. Lord Christopher Patten who is the Chancellor of Oxford University (and former European Commissioner for External Relations) is to chair the group which will contain the following additional members:

Prof. Erwin Neher, Nobel Prize-winner, Max-Planck-Institut für biophysikalische Chemie, Göttingen

Dr. Catherine Bréchnignac, Director, Institut d'Optique, Université Paris Sud

Prof. Jüri Engelbrecht, President of the Estonian Academy of Sciences

Prof. Guido Martinetti, Facoltà de Sociologia Università degli Studi de Milano-Bicocca

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC press release at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/90&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Public debate on economic migration

The Commission has adopted a green paper on 'An EU approach to managing economic migration', in the hope of stimulating public debate on the issue.

DG Justice, Freedom and Security would like to encourage a wider debate between civil society as a whole, the social partners and the European institutions. The Italian Commissioner, Franco Frattini, wanted a more bottom-up approach, and welcomed the range of views from Member States, the EP and trade unions and employers, amongst others. The Commission will organise a hearing on this issue in July 2005 and incorporate the findings of this comprehensive debate in a policy plan on legal migration, as requested by the Hague Programme, for the end of 2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Further information on moves towards a common EU immigration policy available from the EC webpage at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/fsj/immigration/fsj_immigration_intro_en.htm

Contributions from the relevant stakeholders can be sent to the mailbox :

<mailto:mjls-economic-migration@cec.eu.int> by 1 April 2005.

European Group of Life Sciences conclusions

The European Group of Life Sciences (EGLS), established in 2000 to advise the Commission on current and future life science technologies, has completed its mandate. The group finished its work with a number of conclusions on the relationship between science and society, as well as other challenges facing Europe in the future.

The EGLS has identified 15 scientific challenges that it believes can contribute to tackling the EU's major societal problems, and which could be used to shape the European research agenda in the coming years. The areas selected are diverse, and include food supply and natural resources, microbial lifestyles and the microbial metagenome, stem cells, infectious diseases, regulations, systems biology, synthetic biology and education. Some of these must be priorities in Europe in order to ensure human survival, while others promise a better quality of life. Knowledge in all of these fields is also likely to boost economic competitiveness, particularly in those that are only beginning to emerge now.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Available from the CORDIS website at:

ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/cordis/docs/conclusions_egls_final_211204_outec2_for_print.doc

ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/cordis/docs/egls_brochure_3rd_edition_v02_100105_out_ec.pdf

ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/cordis/docs/egls_conf_report_final.doc

Clinical trials results to be made public

Four major international pharmaceutical associations, including the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA), have endorsed a worldwide voluntary register of clinical trials for new prescription-only medicines.

The organisations have agreed that these results should be made freely available to the public online. Pharmaceutical companies will not be required to publish all data on all trials but will be encouraged to publish the results, regardless of outcome, along with safety and benefits evaluations. The companies involved thus far, hope that others will follow suit and lead to greater transparency in the future.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Joint Position on the Disclosure of Clinical Trial Information via Clinical Trial Registries and Database from the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) website at: http://www.efpia.org/4_pos/sci_regu/Clinicaltrials2005.pdf

Feedback on Commission EU action plan on drugs consultation

The EC received 35 responses, many from EU-wide networks, but also individuals and political parties to its consultation on the EU Action Plan on Drugs 2005-08. The replies were varied and covered general views on drug policy to specific proposals. Many respondents considered that it was an unfortunately tight schedule and that the lack of an Action Plan upon which to comment (and that only a draft of the EU Drugs Strategy 2005-12 was available) hindered knowledgeable dialogue. As concerns drug policies in general, the views ranged from restrictive policies to legislation/decriminalisation of some

substances. Many had different views as to whether decisions should be made at EU or Member State level. Overall, respondents supported the idea that an evaluation of what works and what doesn't should inform policy, and that this information, though available, is either not known about or disregarded.

A balanced approach to demand and supply-side issues was supported widely, with more law enforcement focus on the traffickers than the users. It was felt important that drug policies impact on other fields should be better recognised, and that attention should be given to the actual coverage of the drug policies themselves. In addition, the transparency, co-ordination and involvement of civil society in drug policy was of concern.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/news/consulting_public/drugs/summary_contributions_en.pdf

Consultation on accessibility of ICT products and services

The Commission has launched a public consultation on how to make the benefits of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) available to the widest possible range of citizens, including to older and disabled people. The online consultation focuses on three key areas in which the EU could promote e-accessibility: public procurement, certification and the use of legislation.

The results of this consultation, which is available online until the 12 February 2005, as well as other sources of input, will be used to help define a Commission Communication on e-accessibility which should be adopted before June 2005. The other sources of input mainly include the following: previous results from e-Europe activities and from relevant research sectors of the EU RTD Framework Programmes; internal EC consultations with related services; information gathered from working groups of Member States representatives and experts, in particular INCOM, eAccessibility Expert Group; and relevant working parties of eEurope Advisory group and a workshop held in Brussels in EC premises in October 2004.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Europa website at:

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/policy/accessibility/com_ea_2005/index_en.htm
and <http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/forms/dispatch?form=369>

Five year assessment of IST research and technology development

A report assessing Information Society and Technology Research and development (IST RTD) under EU research framework programmes 5 and 6 for the period of 1999-2003 was released this month. The Commission had tasked a high-level panel of independent experts to assess the effectiveness and achievements of IST research and development under FP5 and FP6. The panel was chaired by Professor J.M. Gago, former Portuguese Science Minister and one of the authors of the Lisbon strategy.

The key recommendations of the panel included the following: to increase funding for IST RTD as a unique driver for collaboration between firms and academia and a vital source of

innovation in Europe; to reduce bureaucracy which although aiming for greater accountability, tighter controls on funding procedures and reduced risks it still threatens to kill research; to step up the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises and new Member States and to bring them more into innovation networks; to improve communications, and target them by audience to broaden take-up of research results; and to assess the need for additional human resources in IST research in Europe. Viviane Reding, Information Society and Media Commissioner, promised rapid political action on the recommendations of the panel.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

DG Information Society and Media website at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/information_society/evaluation/ist_rtd/5_year_assessment/index_en.htm

EU 'superjumbo'

This month saw the unveiling of the worlds largest ever passenger plane. The double-decker Airbus A380 seats 555 people and is 'a success of the European industrial policy', according to French President Jacques Chirac. The plane is the result of close co-operation between France, Germany, Spain and the UK and it was European industrial policy which helped create Airbus as the worlds leading aircraft manufacturer.

The aircraft can fly up to 15 thousand kilometres and will therefore enable non-stop Europe to Asia flights. The first test flight is set for April 2005 and we can expect to see passenger flights begin in 2006. Development of the plane is a fine example of European science and engineering, triumphed by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, saying 'We may have reached for the stars ... but as far as the aeronautical industry is concerned we caught some of those stars'.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Euractiv website at: <http://www.euractiv.com/Article?tcmuri=tcm:29-134320-16&type=News>

ESAs 'titanic' success

On 14 January 2005, the European Space Agencies 'Huygens probe' made an historic descent and landed on the surface of Titan, the largest of Saturn's moons. Huygens travelled to Titan as part of the joint ESA/NASA/ASI Cassini-Huygens mission and the first scientific assessments of Huygens' data were presented during a press conference at ESA head office in Paris on 21 January.

Spectacular captured images reveal that Titan has similar meteorology and geology to Earth including in its complex network of narrow drainage channels running from brighter highlands to lower, flatter, dark regions which are similar to Earth's rivers. Whilst Titan's rivers and lakes appear dry at the moment, scientists think that rain may have occurred not long ago. Also of interest, data has shown that the material beneath the surface crust has the consistency of loose sand, possibly the result of methane rain falling on the surface over eons, or the wicking of liquids from below towards the surface, and new evidence based on finding atmospheric argon 40 indicates that Titan has experienced volcanic activity generating not lava, as on Earth, but water, ice and ammonia. 'We are really

extremely excited about these results. The scientists have worked tirelessly for the whole week because the data they have received from Huygens are so thrilling. This is only the beginning, these data will live for many years to come and they will keep the scientists very busy', said Jean-Pierre Lebreton, ESA Huygens Mission manager.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

European Space Agency website at:

http://www.esa.int/esaCP/SEMTKR71Y3E_index_0.html

€150 million to help Galileo

The European Space Agency (ESA) recently signed a €150 million contract with Galileo Industries initiating construction of the constellations first four satellites. This contract is the second stage for the 'in-orbit validation' (IOV) phase (a post-test but prior to deployment stage). The IOV phase will cost a total of €950 million a sum conveying the delivery of the first four satellites (the final constellation will contain 30 satellites) in addition to the ground stations needed to operate them. Giuseppe Viriglio, director of EU and industrial programmes at the ESA was quoted as saying 'This marks a further step forward for Galileo. In line with the recent EU Transport Council green light for final deployment of the constellation, the ESA is securing the foundations for this unique satellite locating and positioning system.' Günter Stamerjohanns, CEO of Galileo Industries, also commented that 'This contract marks a key step towards completing this major European technology project. Galileo Industries is proud to be playing a leading part in meeting this enormous challenge'

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For further information on Galileo, please consult the following web addresses:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy_transport/galileo/index_en.htm

<http://www.galileoju.com/page.cfm?voce=m&idvoce=301&plugIn=1>

RESEARCH NEWS

LIIKE programme

LIIKE is the first national research programme funded in collaboration with the Academy of Finland and the National Technology Agency Tekes in the field of business studies. The programme focuses on the changes of Finnish companies and their management under the pressure of knowledge-based competition and finance-driven economy. The LIIKE programme was launched in 2001 and featured 17 projects within the focus of globalisation and internationalisation.

Professor Arja Ropo, Director of the LIIKE Research is now working on a follow on to the programme. She believes "Overall the LIIKE programme gave us a good general idea of how Finnish business management should be developed in the future. It pointed the way to new business concepts, such as networked models of business. Its contribution to new ways of organisation and leadership is equally important".

FURTHER INFORMATION:

LIIKE website at: <http://www.uta.fi/tutkimus/liike/>

Polish technology platforms

On 10 January 2005, the Polish Ministry Research and Information Technology hosted a conference in Warsaw launching the Polish Technology Platforms Programme. The event demonstrated the commitment of Polish industry to the development of these platforms, and was chaired by Polish national government representatives, the EC and the National Contact Point for Poland.

Three existing platforms in Textiles and Clothing, Construction and Aeronautics were able to showcase some of their achievements. Seven further platforms in the process of being set up were represented in the fields of Sustainable Chemistry, Forestry, Water Transport, Rail Transport, Hydrogen and Fuel Cells, Food and Biotechnology. In the near future, six further platforms have been planned. The platforms will make an important contribution to a framework for Polish research, and Poland's contribution to the European Research Area.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Polish National Contact Point mdorota.libiszowska@kpk.gov.pl

Smart house

An IST-funded project called INSPIRE has successfully tested a voice-operated smart system to control basic functions in the home, such as turning on the lights or operating the television, which could greatly improve the quality of life of elderly and disabled.

The project is co-ordinated by KNOWLEDGE S.A. in Greece, and the partners in the project are confident that they will be able to have a commercial version of their system on the market within two years. Within the property, the interactive computer system picks up voice commands from wall-mounted microphones, while remote access is provided via voicemail over mobile and fixed-line communications. The system, which can be programmed to operate in any language, was tested in five pilot trials in Germany and Greece involving around 100 users.

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Semantic web

Recent trials of European semantic-Web applications suggest that machine-readable data will soon deliver an improved Web that will facilitate information reuse, and provide for

painless building and maintenance of community portals. The trials were part of the IST SWAD-Europe project led by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and involve the University of Bristol, HP Labs, Rutherford-Appleton Laboratories and Stilo Ltd. The projects goal was to ensure that Semantic Web technologies become widely accepted in networked computing.

The project partners successfully demonstrated the Semantic Web's capabilities through two demonstrators, created by HP Labs. The first, the Semantic Web Environmental Directory (SWED), is a prototype of a new kind of directory of environmental organisations and projects.

The SWED browser, produced under SWAD-Europe, allows anyone to build their own directory pages. The SWED browser is one of a new breed of faceted browsers, which call on hierarchical faceted metadata to refine and expand search queries. The projects second demonstrator involves semantic blogging in the bibliography management area. It was chosen because people working in this field need to share small items of information with a peer group in an easy and timely fashion

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Libby Miller, Semantic Web Coordinator (SWAD-Europe)
The Institute for Learning and Research Technology (ILRT)
University of Bristol
8-10 Berkeley Square
Bristol BS8 1HH

Knowledge management

An IST-funded project aims to enable mobile, personalised knowledge management using rich multimedia to improve the efficiency of mobile business processes, by taking advantage of 'always on', high-speed connections offered by wireless networks as well as new hardware options offered by camera-equipped handheld devices, such as smart phones, PDAs or tablet PCs.

In addition to the development of an integrated system prototype, some of the individual tools that combine to make up the MUMMY package could have potential stand-alone applications in a wide range of domains. These include: a mobile collaborative Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG) tool which enables sharing, annotating and co-working of plan information and context-related information and an interactive video tool (hypervideo) which allows the annotation of a video stream (e.g. from a site inspection) with other media as text, images, links, etc. It provides easy mobile authoring and annotation of those interactive video regions, and instant sharing of this knowledge with the back-end. These various tools are integrated into the system prototype, even though the eventual end users will probably not need to use all of its functional capability.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

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Stem cells: providing clues to ill-health in later life

It has long been thought that there is a link between maternal diet during pregnancy and the long term health of the offspring. Animal studies have provided confirmation of this link, but since human trials are unacceptable on ethical grounds, researchers funded by the UK Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) have turned to embryonic human stem cells for possible answers.

Dr Lorraine Young at the University of Nottingham's Division of Obstetrics and Gynaecology is leading a group of scientists studying the influence of various nutrients such as vitamin B12, amino acids and folic acid on the methylation process (which controls gene activity as an organism develops into adulthood) in stem cells. By subsequently stimulating the undifferentiated stem cells to develop into particular cell types, the researchers can see whether the effect is still present in the adult cell. The work could also have important implications for improving the nutrient mix used in vitro fertilisation technology.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/headlines/news/article_05_01_17_en.html

Does the secret to longevity lie in the female heart?

Why women should live longer than men has long been questioned. It was previously thought that lifestyle, war and perhaps the labour-intensive work men tended to do in the past might have contributed to this phenomenon. But now, researchers in the UK think that there may be another reason, perhaps women's hearts are simply stronger.

The researchers conducted the largest study ever undertaken on the effects of ageing on our cardiovascular system. Whilst it had previously been shown that women generally live longer than men, we now have a situation in which women over 60 years old are the fastest-growing group in today's ageing society and researchers at Liverpool's John Moores University (LJMU) have shown that women's longevity may be linked to the way their hearts age and maintain pumping power as they get older. Interestingly, whilst the power in men's hearts was shown to fall by 20 to 25 per cent between 18 and 70 years of age, the female heart showed no age-related decline. This essentially means that the heart of a healthy 70 year-old women could perform almost as well as a 20 year-olds according to David Goldspink, Professor of Cell and Molecular Sports Science at LJMU who is now calling for a major public campaign in the UK to inform people about how much and what kind of exercise they should undertake to age more healthily in response to these findings.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/headlines/news/article_05_01_21_en.html

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CULTURE

Culture 2000 projects in 2004

The EC has published a summary of projects it funded under the Culture 2000 programme in 2004. The priority theme for 2004 was cultural heritage and it is within this field that the majority of the 233 projects are focused. Participants were from all the Member States, EEA countries, Romania and Bulgaria. The majority of projects are annual co-operation projects, which must involve at least three co-organisers. Of this type, 209 projects were funded, with 95 in the Cultural Heritage Programme, (including six with third countries), 68 translation projects and 23 performing arts project. They will share a total of €18.5 million. The remaining 24 projects are multi-annual projects, focusing on cultural heritage again (17), following by three in performing arts, two in visual arts and two in reading. They share €13.5 million.

The Culture 2000 programme is funded by the EC. It is a single financing and programming instrument for cultural co-operation, running from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2004. In July 2004 the Commission proposed a new cultural co-operation programme for the period 2007-13, with a budget of €400 million and three priorities: mobility of artists and cultural workers, mobility of works and intercultural dialogue.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC website at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/index_en.html

Leonardo da Vinci Awards 2004

The EC recently announced the three winners of the first ever Leonardo da Vinci Awards. They were presented last week in Maastricht by: Mark Rutte, Dutch State Secretary of Education; Nikolaus van der Pas, Director General of Education and Culture of the EC; and Jane Davidson, Welsh Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. The three winners were for pan-European projects including one co-ordinated in the UK.

The winning projects included:

- a) the Leonardo Power Quality Initiative (LPQI) which was promoted by the European Copper Institute and has partners in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK
- b) the 'Accumulated Knowledge and Skills' project, promoted by ELBUS – Norwegian Electro-technical Research and Development Centre and which has partners in Denmark, Greece, Norway, Sweden and the UK
- c) the European Medical Imaging Technology Training project, promoted by EMIT Consortium and with partners in France, Italy, Sweden and the UK.

The trophies presented to the Award-winners were designed by Katrin Marx, an apprentice jeweller-goldsmith from Germany. Katrin started her training in 2003, and won a Europe-wide competition to design the trophy.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The DG Education and Culture Leonardo da Vinci website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/new/valorisation/maastricht_en.html

Commissioner emphasises key role of teachers in knowledge-based economy

Ján Figel', European Commissioner responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, spoke on the 'The role of Teachers in the Knowledge Society' at the recent ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee For Education) hearing 'Europe needs Teachers'. The Commissioner summarised the key concerns raised in the Joint Interim Report on 'Education and Training 2010', and the Kok report 'Facing the Challenge', about the need to work harder to meet the Lisbon Objectives and the fact that Europe is unlikely to meet the 2010 deadline. In doing so, he stated the central role of education and training in creating a knowledge society and therefore that of the teaching profession. The central role of teachers in the knowledge society gives teachers immense responsibility and it is therefore important that teachers are equipped to deal with the complexities of dynamic society within which themselves and their pupils will be working. This requires increased investment in teacher education, taking into the account the need to create a culture of continuous professional development, at an individual, school, regional, national and European level.

The European Trade Union Committee for Education, which was established in 1975, represents 118 teachers' unions in 28 European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries. ETUCE is composed of national organisations of teachers and other staff in education being member organisations of Education International (EI) or the World Confederation of Teachers (WCT). It has associated member organisations in the Central and Eastern European countries. The total coverage in Europe amounts to 166 organisations.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Full speech at ETUCE website at:

http://www.etuce.homestead.com/News/Jan2005/Figel_speech.pdf

EXTERNAL COLLABORATION

Croatian membership to the EC

The Croatian people have recently re-elected Stipe Mesic as their President, with a majority of 66 per cent. He is considered pro-western and keen to guide Croatia into EU membership in 2009. He will therefore lead the talks that will open the accession negotiations on 17 March 2005. The main conditions at the moment include co-operation with a UN War Tribunal (specifically the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslav (ICTY)) being held at The Hague.

Croatia is the second former Yugoslav Republic to be awarded Candidate status, after Slovenia (who acceded on 1 May 2004). Following its application in 2003, the Council agreed its candidature in June 2004, re-affirming its prime condition on entering negotiations was to be co-operation with the ICTY. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with Croatia will enter into force on 1 February 2005. It was signed in October 2001 and is the first comprehensive agreement between the EU and Croatia. The SAA includes issues such as political dialogue; regional co-operation; the four freedoms with the creation of a free trade area by 2007; approximation of Croatian legislation to the Community acquis, including precise rules in the fields of competition, intellectual property

rights and public procurement; and wide-ranging co-operation in all areas of Community policies, including in the area of justice and home affairs.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC website at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/croatia/index.htm

Ukrainian president to lead his country into the EU

Once his oath had been taken as President of the Ukraine this month, Viktor Yushchenko addressed his supporters saying, "We are no longer on the edge of Europe. We are situated in the heart of Europe". President Yushenko then went on to tell the hundreds of people gathered in Independence Square that he would make Ukraine an "honest nation" and put the country in the heart of a "united Europe". He also commented that the Ukraine and Europe share similar values.

President Yushchenko took the oath of office in front Colin Powell, the outgoing US secretary of state, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the NATO secretary general, EU external affairs chief, Benita Ferrero-Waldner and a number of other foreign dignitaries, although no direct reference was made either to Russia or President Putin who had backed Yushchenko's, rival Yanukovich. President Yushchenko also warned that, "Ukraine will not be a buffer zone or battleground for anyone", highlighting that he would not put Kiev's interests below those of any other nation and stating that, "We are prepared to respect the interests of other states, but for me and for you, national interests are above all else." In the meantime, EU support for Ukrainian membership is slightly less than enthusiastic, with Europe's leaders not only trying hard to deal with the latest round of enlargement but also with the prospect of Turkish accession.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EU Politix website at: <http://www.eupolitix.com/EN/News/200501/af84ec93-d483-466e-9919-07db2b17dc74.htm>

Russian – Europe space pact

The European Space Agency (ESA) signed a long-term co-operation agreement with Russia's Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos) this month. The document covers development, construction and use of space launch crafts and Russia and Europe are shortly to (jointly) construct a launch site for Russian Soyuz rockets at French Guiana's Kourou space centre. The project is worth approximately €344 million and is due to commence in 2007 and the agreement gives Russia special status in, but not membership of, the ESA.

The 'Soyuz at Europe's Spaceport' project makes Russia the ESA's first long-term co-operation partner in space launch programmes and will consolidate Europe's access to space for medium-size missions. 'The project for launching Soyuz from Kourou is only a part of a grand project that leads the way to many others,' commented Roscosmos chief Anatoly Perminov.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Euractiv website at: <http://www.euractiv.com/Article?tcmuri=tcm:29-134353-16&type=News>

EVENTS and AWARDS

The Swiss National Science Foundation announce Latsis Prize 2004

The Swiss National Science Foundation Latsis Prize 2004 was presented to Professor Simon Gächter on 13 January 2004 in Berne, Switzerland. Professor Gächter was awarded the prize for his contribution to research into human co-operation and non co-operation. Professor Gächter, alongside his co-author Ernst Fehr, published their groundbreaking model of 'altruistic punishment' in Nature magazine in 2002. Their model stipulates that humans are not instinctively selfish actors but are willing to co-operate for the common good, even if there is no prospect of financial or status rewards. The research, based on experimental studies with a group of students, claims to demonstrate that individuals will co-operate for a common purpose if it is possible to guarantee penalties or some kind of punishment to those that are being uncooperative. This goes against the established paradigm supported by many economists and biologists.

The National Latsis Prize is one of Switzerland's most prestigious scientific awards. It is awarded annually on behalf of the Geneva-based Latsis Foundation by the Swiss National Science Foundation. The CHF 100,000 award honours the outstanding scientific achievements of a research scientist aged 40 or less in Switzerland.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Swiss National Science Foundation website at:

http://www.snf.ch/en/com/prr/prr_arh_05jan07.asp

APRE presents award for young scientists

The Agency for the Promotion of European Research (APRE), presented its awards for the three best essays written by school children, on the subject of science and research. The awards were presented to Alessandro and Bryan, 11 and 10 years old, originally from the Philippines and Edison, 8 years old from Peru. Their prize included a kit consisting of powerful microscopes, pipettes, solutions for experiments and samples of substance to analyse.

This award is part of a series of activities that APRE has carried out under the ETHNIC European project. The aim of which is to encourage participation in science to children from ethnic communities in Italy. APRE is a non-profit association that provides information, training and assistance on research and technological development programmes, of the EU, to its members. Established in 1990, APRE represents a vast interest group of organisations and companies which are active in research and technological innovation in Italy.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

APRE website at: <http://www.apre.it/ethnic.htm>

Australasian society of clinical immunology and allergy (ASCIA)

The ASCIA annual scientific meeting 2005 will take place in Queenstown, New Zealand from 31 August to 4 September 2005. The overarching theme for this conference will be 'excellence in clinical and laboratory immunology'. The Meeting will be divided into two programmes, which will be held sequentially:

- 1) ASCIA 2005 meeting: emphasis on clinical practice
- 2) Queenstown Immunopathology Program (QIP 2005): covering different aspects of diagnostic laboratory practice including allergy, primary immunodeficiency and autoimmunity

FURTHER INFORMATION:

ASCIA calendar at: http://www.allergy.org.au/calendar/asm2005/ASCIA_ASM2005.pdf

Australian Plant Breeding Conference (APBC)

The 13th Australian Plant Breeding Conference (APBC) will be held on 18-21 April 2006 in Christchurch, New Zealand. This is the first time the conference has been held outside Australia, and the first occasion that a major plant breeding conference has been held in New Zealand since 1986. The theme for the 13th APBC is "Breeding for success: Diversity in action" and the programme will be based around six core areas:

- benefits from plant improvement
- genetic resources in a genomics era
- environmental challenges and opportunities
- plant gene technologies
- added value products
- parallel breeding of plants and associated organisms

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The APBC website at: <http://events.lincoln.ac.nz/apbc/default.htm>

NEW PUBLICATIONS and ONLINE RESOURCES

Consultation results on a European Fundamental Rights Agency

The results of the public consultation on the establishment of a European Fundamental Rights Agency are now available. The Commission Directorate for Justice and Home Affairs has made the responses available online on its website, as below. The submissions are listed per category of stakeholder; civil society/non-governmental, private citizens, national institutes for human rights, national parliaments, member states and international organisations.

A public hearing also took place in Brussels on 25 January 2005, on the issues raised by the consultation. The debate centres on extending the role of the Vienna-based EU monitoring centre on racism and xenophobia, in order to convert it into a fundamental rights agency.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Consultation results, available at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/news/consulting_public/fundamental_rights_agency/news_contributions_fund_rights_agency_en.htm

Commission communication on a European Fundamental Rights Agency, available at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/news/consulting_public/fundamental_rights_agency/communication_com2004_693_en.pdf

Commission report on industrial relations and restructuring

A new Commission report indicates that the changes brought about by globalisation are making industrial relations in Europe more and more important. The publication, entitled 'Industrial Relations in Europe 2004' points to a growing trend for negotiations at company level, where workers are more concerned with job security than short term financial gain. The changing operating conditions for trade unions and employers, mean new challenges such as work-life balance and stress are having a greater impact.

In spite of these trends, the negotiations are diverse across Europe, with shared understandings and mutual trust as common keys to success. The report, which is the third of its kind following the 2000 and 2002 versions, notes increasing interaction between different levels of industrial relations in Europe and stresses that stable and reliable partners are essential in a restructuring economic environment.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Commission report and summary, available at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2005/jan/industrial_relations_2004_report_en.html

New service available from the European Patent Office

The European Patent Office has introduced a new system to retrieve patent information. The system is accessible for all, from any location. The developers hope to help stimulate innovation in the European economy.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

European Patent Office system, available at:

<http://www.epoline.org>

Commission Fact sheets on Key Freedom, Security and Justice Issues

Fact sheets on key issues related to the development of the EU into an area of freedom, security and justice have been prepared to explain to the non-specialist what the policies or activities are and why the EU is involved. They are being made available in all official EU languages. Fact sheets currently available include the following: freedom, security and justice; historic stages; European arrest warrants; and trafficking in human beings.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The EC fact sheets are available from the EC website at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/key_issues_en.htm

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://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/en/index.htm>

Official Journal C & L <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/JOIndex.do?ihmlang=en>

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 - This 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	of 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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