
News on EU Research Policy and Programmes

Issue: EI 05:03 – 1 March 2005

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EU POLICY

Mid-term review of Lisbon Strategy

The EC has released its Mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy. The review (Working together for growth and jobs: a new start for the Lisbon Strategy) contains a number of proposed actions relevant to the RTD community including increasing (and improving) investment in RTD, facilitating innovation and contributing to a strong European industrial base.

Specifically, the proposal contains a new action plan which sets out a number of priorities to help drive EU productivity/growth and thus create more jobs. In line with recognition that RTD is a major tool for boosting economic competitiveness, a number of these priorities contain specific reference to this area such as in making the EU a more attractive place to both invest and work in through extending and deepening the internal market and expanding and improving European Infrastructure, boosting knowledge and innovation for growth by increasing (and improving) investment in RTD, and creating more and better jobs by attracting more people into employment and improving adaptability of workers and enterprises. The proposal also contains detail on improving the governance of the Lisbon Strategy (e.g. through making clear definition of Member State/EU level responsibility) and simplification of reporting.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC press release reference IP/05/130 at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/130&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Five-Year assessment of EU Framework Programmes 1999-2003

An expert panel, appointed by the EC, and chaired by Dr Erkki Ormala, Vice President of Technology Policy at Nokia, has produced its report to assess the contribution of the Framework Programmes to the EU. The panel concluded that the positive effects they found would require support from further resources in the future, simplified administration, greater industry, especially SME, participation, and more support to highly innovative projects.

The panel observed that work in previous studies and expert panels, all appeared to point in one direction: that research and innovation are key to meeting EU policy challenges. For the panel, this meant that they were justified in making claims for a mobilisation of EU financial resources and the promotion of science, technology and innovation. These are

vital to the aims of increasing the prosperity and quality of life for EU citizens. Increases in resources to support research and innovation at EU level, would only be effective if Member States also increased their expenditure. EU Research Commissioner, Janez Potočnik, welcomed the report, saying, 'It is encouraging to receive the panel's assessment that the Framework Programmes have contributed to the creation of a knowledge society in Europe, and this report will provide considerable inspiration for the design of the next programme. I especially share the view that Europe needs to gain world leadership in certain key technologies'.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The report is available from the EC website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/information_society/evaluation/pdf/5_y_a/ist_5ya_final_140105.pdf

Supporting scientific research in the EU

On Monday 21 February, members of the EP Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) adopted a report by MEP Pia Elda Locatelli on the future of EU research.

In order for Europe to improve its competitiveness and for the European Research Area (ERA) to become a reality, MEPs believe that the percentage of Member States' GDP represented by the FP7 budget needs to be at least doubled and will call on the EC to structure the duration of FP7 in line with its proposals for the 2007-2013 financial perspective. At the Parliament plenary session on 24 February, MEPs asked the EC how this increase in the EU budget for research could be financed and commented on the importance of continuity between FP6 and FP7, stressing that the main research areas should be consistent with the strategic priorities of the Lisbon agenda. In relation to this, the MEPs indicated support for the inclusion of security/defence and space research, research into the life sciences, nanotechnologies, chemicals and non-CO2 producing energy sources. MEPs also support the swift establishment of the European Research Council (ERC) to provide EU support for basic and long-term research in order to improve European competitiveness. MEPs also stressed that the ERC should avoid duplication with existing structures, have adequate funding and stream-lined administrative procedures.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

From the EP Press Service at:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/press/index_en.htm

EC calls for Member State reforms to boost EU growth and employment

The EC has recently adopted a Joint Employment Report (JER) indicating that, in spite of reforms in several Member States, EU employment rates have stagnated and growth in productivity fallen. The JER and other reports, such as the Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion will all form part of an "Implementation Package". The JER confirms that action is needed in four areas, as identified by the Employment Taskforce (or Kok) report. These areas are: increasing the adaptability of workers and enterprises, attracting more people into the workforce and retaining them, investing more in education and lifelong learning and ensuring the effective implementation of reforms. These areas are of interest to both research and education communities.

Progress over the last few years has been made to complete the European single market, improving the conditions for business and making employment more resilient to economic difficulties. However, progress has been uneven, and slow in areas such as gender pay gaps, training rates, undeclared work and active ageing strategies.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Press release IP/05/100 at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/100&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

EC proposes creation of a Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation

The EC is in the process of putting together a proposal for a Framework Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation (CIP). The programme is designed to support competitiveness and innovation in the single market and looks to bring together a number of existing Community programmes including innovation-related activities of the Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development.

The CIP will bring together a number of additional programmes including the Multiannual Programme for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (MAP), the Modinis, e-Content and e-TEN programmes. To determine Community views on its proposals, the EC launched a public consultation. A document summarising general results from the consultation can be found at the link below with a more detailed report to be made available from the EC website in the near future.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Results from the consultation can be found on the DG enterprise website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/cip/docs/stats_competitiveness.pdf

EC stresses importance of pending chemical products directive

At the same time as unveiling the new 'Growth and Jobs Strategy' for the EU in an attempt to re-vitalise the Lisbon agenda, EC President Barroso took the opportunity to stress the importance of the beneficial impact of two currently pending directives. The EC expects that the Services directive will create a genuine single European market for services, and the REACH directive on chemical products will seek to stimulate innovation whilst also protecting the environment. These are among the EUs most contested items of legislation.

At a session with the EP, Barroso stated that he was ready to make the REACH chemicals measures more palatable to industry. Industry had complained strongly and openly that the REACH proposal could seriously harm EU industry and lead to trade wars. In a reshuffle, the brief for REACH will be taken over by EU Industry Commissioner, Gunter Verheugen, from the EU Environment Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, a clear sign that industry's participation is key. Verheugen stated that he would not seek to withdraw the REACH proposal, but some considerable adaptations might be required.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

DG Environment page on chemical products, available at:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/chemicals/>

DG Enterprise page on REACH and stakeholder consultation, available at:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/reach/>

Obesity worries: EC to call time on some of our favourite characters

Characters such as the Honey Monster, Tony the Tiger and Ronald McDonald could soon disappear from our television screens under EU plans to curb the advertising of junk food to children. The EC is calling for urgent action to tackle increasingly widespread obesity in the EU and consequently has requested that food companies take voluntary action to stop promoting food high in sugar, fat and salt to children.

Legislation would focus on adverts aimed at children, in particular those that use cartoon characters to appeal to children, such as Frostie's Tony the Tiger, Sugar Puff's Honey Monster and McDonald's Ronald McDonald. The EC issued the warning as a result of concern about the widespread obesity among the EU children which is recording highs of one in four European children as overweight.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

available from the Timesonline website at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1449917,00.html>

Public health programme

The EC organised an Information Day on the Public Health Programme this month. The meeting was held in Luxembourg and used to present the programme's objectives for 2005 and encourage potential beneficiaries to participate in the call.

Approximately 300 participants attended the event, representing non-governmental organisations, patients' groups, health professionals, health service providers, ministries and academic institutions in the Member States, Candidate Countries and EEA/EFTA countries. During the meeting, participants were able to attend a number of workshops covering health information, threats and determinants, financial and administrative aspects of the programme and practical sessions on filling in the applications forms.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

General information on the day and Presentations from all the workshops are available from the Public Health Programme website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_programme/howtoapply/infoday_2005/info_day_en.htm

Report on the local dimension of the Information Society

A paper resulting from the co-operation between the EC and ESDIS (the High Level Group of Member States' Experts on the Employment and Social Dimensions of the Information Society) has called for the establishment of indicators to assess the impact of policies promoting eInclusion, recommending a more sustained effort for the collection and dissemination of good practice.

The report shows that more and more Europeans, from a wider range of social groups, are using Information and Communication Technology. There are, however, still differences in usage, both between Member States and, when looking at regions, between different groups. Women have overtaken men in the past three years in their pace of internet take-up, and the over 55s are also increasingly gaining computer skills. However others, particularly people with low levels of income and education, are not catching up as quickly. While exclusion from the Information Society does not by itself necessarily lead to social exclusion, it is broadly true that the socially excluded tend to have limited access to ICT. Without action, says the report, Europe may become even more polarised between the 'eIncluded and the eExcluded'.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The report is available from the EC website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2005/feb/einclusion_en.html

i2010 initiative

i2010 is a recently launched EC initiative intended to build on the current 'wave of technological and economic development' and thus help Europe boost prosperity, jobs and growth .

Mrs Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media launched i2010. She indicated that the 'i in 2010 stands for information space; innovation and investment; and inclusion. Through the initiative, Mrs Reding aims to create open and stable markets for electronic communications services and the emerging digital services economy. She also intends to make the information society accessible to everyone in Europe in addition to substantially increasing the research budget for information and communication technologies (ICT). Mrs Reding said 'I am looking for support to double the information society technology budget in the next EU Framework Research Programme', 'Being serious on Lisbon and growth and jobs means having the courage to increase R&D spending. We need to invest now and we have to invest enough to make a difference.' In particular, Ms Reding wants to see channelling a higher percentage of the EU research budget into ICT which currently gets approximately 20% of the total R&D budget, some 10% less than major OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. Mrs Reding accepts that simply funding more research is insufficient however indicating that 'Its efficiency and effectiveness must be improved. I will seek changes in the Community research programme, to cut red tape and encourage more SME and corporate involvement.'

FURTHER INFORMATION:

available from the EC, Cordis website at: <http://dbs.cordis.lu/fep->

[cgi/srchidadb?CALLER=FP6_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23296](http://dbs.cordis.lu/fep-cgi/srchidadb?CALLER=FP6_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23296)

Safer Internet Day

On 8 February 2005, Safer Internet Day was celebrated by 65 organisations in 30 countries across the world from Australia to Iceland, and Russia to Singapore. The day featured an Internet adventure storytelling contest for children in 19 countries and 16 languages, to be judged in June 2005. Safer Internet Day is part of a global drive by awareness-raising partners to promote a safer Internet for all users, especially young people. The day also included conferences, the launch of Internet literacy programmes in schools, media releases on radio and television and the launch of several new Safer Internet websites.

EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Viviane Reding, warned that 'Parents overestimate their level of knowledge about how to protect their children online. More than 60 % of Europe's parents do not think their children know what to do if a situation on the internet makes them uncomfortable. We are committed to empowering future generations of Europeans to use information and communication technology safely, ethically and effectively'. The Safer Internet plus programme 2005-08 will continue to raise awareness, as part of a coherent and consistent policy on children and media.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

On Safer Internet Day, INSAFE network, and INSAFE newsletter, available from the Safer Internet website at: <http://www.saferinternet.org/>

EU software patent proposals

The EU software patent proposals, included in the 'Computer Implemented Inventions Directive', are still deemed controversial by the EP. The Directive was first proposed in 2002, and is required to go through the co-decision procedure for approval. The Legal Affairs Committee (JURI) rejected European Internal Market Commissioner Charlie McCreevy's latest proposals, at their meeting in early February. This is the EP's second reading of the Directive. Their first reading resulted in a series of proposed changes that were rejected by the Council. The Parliament has now requested that the European Ministers of Competition agree to withdraw the 'Computer Implemented Inventions Directive' as it stands, when they meet next in March.

Most MEPs, and several Member States, argue that the proposals would protect larger companies and hinder small and medium sized software firms from carrying out innovative research and development. They argue that software design is un-patentable because it is similar to the principles of musical composition, as they are using established notions in different sequences to create a new product. However, it is understood that some firms believe there is a need for the protection the direction offers to make their research worthwhile.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC internal markets website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/indprop/comp/

Earth and Space week

February saw world leaders, policymakers, European astronauts and experts brought together for the EC Earth and Space week. The event, which was organised jointly by the EC and the European Space Agency (ESA), featured the third Earth Observation summit in addition to a series of seminars and conferences designed to bring world

leaders together for discussion and shaping of future Earth observation capabilities and increased co-operation in space. The conference was requested by the EP and comes at a particularly interesting time following on from a recent white paper on Space and in preparation for further discussion on contents of FP7.

The third Earth Observation summit aimed to bring together ministers and officials from 58 countries in order to gain approval for a ten year implementation plan to build a more timely, accurate and available information system via development of a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). The summit also featured discussion on Galileo (the EUs global navigation satellite system) and the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security initiative (GMES).

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC Earth and Space week website at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/space/esw/index_en.htm

EU Constitution Goes Into Space!

To mark Earth and Space Week (see article above), a copy of the EU Constitution was presented to the European Astronaut Corps to be taken into space on the International Space Station.

Günther Verheugen, EU Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry presented a copy of the EU Constitution to the European Astronaut Corps which is to be taken to the International Space Station by Italian Astronaut Roberto Vittori in April. In a letter accompanying the Constitution, Commissioner Verheugen wrote 'once in orbit, the Constitution will not only circle Europe, but the globe. It is to be hoped that this symbol of European identity will be welcomed by both Europeans and their counterparts throughout the world'.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

available from the Earth and Space week website at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/space/esw>

Climate Change: the EUs Post-2012 Strategy

The EC has adopted a Communication setting out future policies of climate change, as well as a set of proposals designed to structure the future negotiations of the EU after 2012 when the first commitment period under the Kyoto protocol ends. The communication (Winning the Battle Against Global Climate Change) underlines that the transition to a climate-friendly society offers economic opportunities for the EU, reinforcing its Lisbon agenda. Several proposals are put forward on how to develop increased energy efficiency and security of energy supply, including an increase in EU spending on research, and the development of new climate-friendly technologies.

The EC report recommends that the EU post-2012 strategy includes elements such as broader international participation in reducing emissions, inclusion of more sectors, a push for innovation in the EU, the continued use of flexible market-based instruments for reducing emissions in the EU and globally and as well as EU adaptation policies. The document also recommends accelerated implementation of existing policies that reduce emissions and which foster new technologies, raising public awareness, more focused

research, increased co-operation with third countries and the launch of a new phase in the European Climate Change Programme to review progress and identify further options for cost-effective emission reductions.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC webpage on climate change post-2012 at:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/climat/future_action.htm

RESEARCH NEWS

European security research programme

The EC recently launched a call for proposals under its Preparatory Action Programme in security research.

The Preparatory Action Programme leads up the future European Security Research Programme which is expected to start in 2007 with a budget of €15 million. The programme is designed to develop, demonstrate and validate technology solutions for security problems in a number of areas including situation awareness, protection of networked systems, protection against terrorism, crisis management and interoperability of control and communications systems. There are a number of projects currently included under the Preparatory Action Plan which include improving security surveillance technology (e.g. in football stadiums) by using sensors which detect dangerous behaviour.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

available from the EC security research website at:

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

eMobility Technology Platform to be launched

An eMobility Technology Platform is to be launched on 18 March 2005. Its primary aim is to foster wireless research and reinforce European leadership in mobile communications. eMobility is a public-private partnership, and has so far raised a total of one billion euros. It is hoped that the EC will match this investment, resulting in a total budget of two billion euros over its first four years. eMobility will apply for funding for a range of research projects, from a range of partners, including the EU, major telecommunication equipment companies and mobile operators. It has devised a research strategy, to be implemented in Europe, which includes a proposal for a Specific Support Action under FP6's Information Society Technologies thematic priority.

The eMobility Technology Platform has been created in response to the notion that mobile and wireless communications have a greater economic impact than the internet, accounting for 3% of European GDP. It is estimated that the sector currently employs 4 million people, with a projected growth of 6 million over the next five years. The platform argues that we are now entering the second phase of growth in these sectors, and that Europe needs to be planning for the systems that will be used in 2010-2015, in order to maintain its competitive lead.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Available from the eMobility website at: <http://www.emobility.eu.org/>

Communicating environmental hazard warnings

An FP5-funded project is looking at new ways to transmit environmental hazard warnings to people at risk. The APNEE project (air pollution network for early warning and online information exchange in Europe) has used a variety of information channels including text services to mobile phones and PDAs, WAP (Wireless Application Protocol), the Internet, and electronic street panels to communicate warning messages, thus providing a package of customisable information services.

Previously, most environmental warnings have been made through broadcast channels, such as radio and television. However, these media have a wide audience, often actually wider than the area at risk. It has been extremely difficult to transmit more targeted warnings through these media, to those in very specific areas. With the new system, warnings can be sent by text message (SMS) in the first instance, with people in the area directly affected then seeking further information through mobile WAP services, and then yet further, more detailed, information through regular Internet facilities. Services can be customised very specifically for users of the system, to take into account communication channels, preferences, and personal health risks or allergies. Business collaboration has been a key element of the project, ensuring that air pollution data can be gathered and disseminated as effectively as possible. The next step is extension to other application domains that need to provide timely and location-dependent information. The results of the APNEE project have been used to make a proposal to the EU Tsunami Working Group, and will be presented at the World Summit on the Information Society, which will be held in Tunis in November 2005.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

available from the APNEE website at: <http://www.apnee.org>

European health threatened by low Arctic temperatures

SCOUT-O3, a project funded under the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6), provides predictions about ozone change in the lower stratosphere and the associated impact on UV radiation and climate, in order to provide vital information for society and policy use.

The SCOUT-3 is co-ordinated by the Department of Chemistry, University of Cambridge and involves 59 partner institutions from 19 countries. Scientists in the project have reported that overall temperatures in the high atmosphere over the Arctic are the lowest for 50 years, and that very cold conditions cause destruction of the protective ozone layer. Conditions remained conducive to ozone loss in an updated report in February 2005. They warn that the returning spring sunshine may break down the ozone layer further, the affected area could spread southwards over northern Europe and create conditions in which more harmful UV radiation reaches ground level. This is likely to have a deleterious effect on human health, with increases in the incidence of skin cancer possible.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For more information about SCOUT- 03 visit the projects website at :
http://www.ozone-sec.ch.cam.ac.uk/scout_o3/

Breakthrough in treating blindness

OPTIVIP is a project financed under the FP5 which has successfully developed an electronic implant to allow a blind person to recover some vision. 'This is a very good example of where European technology can lead worldwide,' said Information Society and Media Commissioner Ms Viviane Reding. 'We have the advantage of having developed the best possible method. This will enable us to sell it around the world instead of depending on a technology developed elsewhere,' she then added.

The OPTIVIP project looked at compensating for retinopathies by bypassing damaged retinal cells and artificially stimulating the optic nerve directly, said Professor Veraart from the Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium who led the project. The team implanted into the nerve an electrode that processes images filmed by a small camera inserted in the patient's glasses.

The application, which is likely to cost some 20,000 euro, is expected to be commercialised by 2008 but 'We have to remember that at present we are talking about a prototype,' said Ms Reding.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Available from the CORDIS FP5 website at:

http://dbs.cordis.lu/fep-cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=135452005-2-24&DOC=4&TBL=EN_NEWS&RCN=EN_CAT_A:Result&CALLER=NEWS_FP5

Diet, obesity and genes

DiOGenes is an integrated project funded under FP6 which provides the scientific basis for achieving a better understanding of the interaction between genetic background and measured phenotypic traits, in particular dietary factors leading to weight gain or regain and their consequences for the development of obesity and co-morbidities.

DiOGenes is coordinated by the University of Maastricht and involves 30 different partner organizations. The rapid increase in the prevalence of obesity and associated co-morbidities is a major global health problem, whilst in Europe, obesity directly consumes about 5 % of total health care budgets and the increase in childhood obesity is of particular concern. DiOGenes takes an innovative approach in the most comprehensive study yet of how genetic and behavioral factors and dietary components interact in the condition. The project will have access to large prospective cohorts across Europe with hard clinical and nutritional data, and this provides a unique opportunity to identify gene-nutrient interactions associated with changes in body weight and waist circumference. Another innovative aspect of the project is the inclusion of food technology studies to develop food that is popular with consumers but at the same time provides satiety signals that limits intake. A final outcome will be the provision of individualised weight management programmes.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For more details on DioGenes, visit the project website at: <http://www.diogenes-eu.org>

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND CULTURE

European Capital of Culture programme

This month, the EP adopted a decision to include the ten New Member States in the list of countries eligible to submit candidate cities for the European Capital of Culture for the years 2005 to 2009.

The decision passed in 1999, which drew up a chronological list of Member States eligible to submit applications to the European Institutions for their cities to be designated Capitals of Culture between 2005 and 2009 has been overtaken by events. The ten new countries who joined the Union in 2004 were not included on it, as their names and their accession dates had not been decided yet. The new text approved by the Parliament however, makes up for this by providing, from 2009 onwards, for two European Capitals of culture per year. Furthermore, the EC has undertaken to submit a new proposal for a decision to reform the decision-making procedure during the first six months of 2005. This new system could enter into force in 2007.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Background information on European Capitals of Culture can be found from the DG Education and Culture, culture website at:

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

Erasmus Mundus courses selected by EC

The EC has selected 17 new Master's courses to the Erasmus Mundus scheme with 69 Universities joining the programme. The selected courses will commence in the next academic year (2005-06) and aim to both strengthen European co-operation and encourage international ties in higher education.

The second call for proposals under the programme saw 139 applications for Master's courses and involved hundreds of European universities. Applications were assessed by independent experts with a list of the 17 best courses produced by a Selection Board. Ján Figel', European Commissioner in charge of Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism has been quoted as saying 'After a successful launch last autumn, this new selection of Erasmus Mundus Master's courses is an illustration of the growing importance of this programme,' European universities continue to come forward in big numbers to participate in the programme, which responds to a real need among higher education institutions and which contributes to restore Europe to a leading position on the international university scene'. The UK is represented in 11 of the courses with Germany, The Netherlands and Sweden and France also high on the list. The courses cover a wide spread of disciplines including special education needs, modelling and management and environmental science, policy and management.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC press release reference IP/05/154 at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/154&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Mobility of Erasmus students and teachers in 2003/4

There was an increase of 9.4% in student mobility and a similar rise for teachers, under the Erasmus Programme for the 2003/04 academic year. Spain received the most students, whilst Germany received the most teachers. 135,586 students from 30 countries (EU – 25 plus Bulgaria, Romania, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) participated in the Erasmus Programme in 2003/4. A large proportion of the rise came from students from the new Member States. Spain, followed by France and then Germany remain the most popular destinations for students, as well as sending the most students abroad. The number of students spending time in the new Member States has increase by 25% overall. Business studies and languages/philology remain the most popular subject area groups.

18,476 teachers participated in Erasmus Programme over the academic year 2003/4, an increase of 9.3% on the previous year. There was a large increase in teachers participating from the new Member States, in particular Latvia, and Lithuania. Germany was the post popular destination, followed by France and Italy. More teachers in Education/Teacher training and Mathematics/Computing participated than other subject areas.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Available from the DG Education and Training website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/erasmus_en.html

European higher education and the Knowledge Economy and Society

An EC conference on 'Enabling European Higher Education to make its full contribution to the Knowledge Economy and Society' was held in Brussels earlier this month. Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism opened the conference. The conference was part of the ECs follow-up work on the role of universities in the Europe of knowledge and focused on two main barriers to the reform of higher education: lack of funding for systems change, and weaknesses in governance of universities in some national systems (particularly those with limited autonomy).

The Commissioner positioned the Bologna Process within the broader framework of the Lisbon objectives. He highlighted common issues between Bologna and Lisbon as follows: the need to facilitate and stimulate mobility; the need to ensure fair and effective access for graduates to the labour market; the need to enhance efficiency of higher education by reducing failure and drop-out rates; and the need to enhance the attractiveness of Europe as a destination for higher education. The outcomes of the conference should contribute to the Communication on Universities and the Knowledge Society, due to be presented in April 05.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

available from the DG Education and Training website at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/lisbon_en.html

Launch of Europass

Ján Figel, European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, launched the implementation of 'Europass' at a conference in Luxembourg, earlier this month. The conference was attended by over 300 representatives of education and training stakeholders from across 32 European countries. The Commissioner highlighted the ECs objective of the Europass helping 3 million people improve their position on the European Labour market, by providing a clearer presentation of individual's qualifications and competences. b Europass consists of 5 documents: CV, portfolio of languages, mobility, qualifications in higher education (diploma supplements) and vocational training. Implementation of the Europass will be supported by the Europass Portal and network of National Europass Centres.

The Europass was adopted by the EP and the Council at the end of 2004. It is one of three complementary instruments supporting mobility within the European strategy Education and Training 2010. The other two include the Ploteus portal that was launched in 2002, and the European Qualifications Framework, that is being developed in line with Maastricht Communication on the 'Future Priorities of Enhanced European Co-operation in Vocational Education and Training (VET)'.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Available from the Europass website at: <http://europass.cedefop.eu.int/htm/index.htm>

EXTERNAL COLLABORATION

Observing the Earth on a global scale

Ministers and delegations from around 60 countries signed up to a 10 year implementation plan for the global Earth observation system of systems (GEOSS) this month. GEOSS is designed to build on existing Earth observation systems by co-ordinating their efforts, addressing gaps, supporting interoperability, sharing information and reaching a common understanding of user requirements. It will also improve the delivery of information to those that need it. The implementation plan sets out a timescale for achieving certain objectives in the fields of improved Earth monitoring, understanding of Earth processes and prediction capabilities for the behaviour of Earth systems.

Participation in GEOSS is voluntary, however, the partners appreciate that some commitment is necessary if this 'system of systems' to function and that, as stated in the plan, 'success of GEOSS will depend on data and information providers accepting and implementing a set of interoperability arrangements, including technical specifications for collecting, processing, storing, and disseminating shared data, metadata, and products.' Research should also benefit from GEOSS since the group will push for further research into instrumentation and system designs for airborne and space-based observation, data management and information fusion, and data assimilation modules.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

available from the CORDIS website at: http://dbs.cordis.lu/fep-cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=190752005-2-24&DOC=1&TBL=EN_NEWS&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:23380&CALLER=EN_NEWS

Western Balkan participation in RTD

Mr Janez Potočnik, Science and Research Commissioner, took the opportunity to promote EU-Western Balkan co-operation during a conference recently held at the EP. The main aim of the event was to examine Western Balkan participation in the EU research framework programmes.

Mr Potočnik addressed assembled policy makers and emphasised the wider political context of scientific collaboration with the region. 'Enlargement of the EU shouldn't end with Romania and Bulgaria; other countries should be brought in too. Scientific co-operation within the framework programmes and elsewhere is a means of consolidating lasting peace and prosperity in the Western Balkan countries,' he said. Mr Potočnik also highlighted that a number of calls for proposals in FP6 addressed challenges in the region and that he could envisage such activities receiving more funds in the future. 'There is a need for strong research institutions and trained researchers in the Western Balkans. Therefore, the Commission has decided to support the most promising scientific institutes in the area, with the aim of assisting in the establishment of regional networks,' he commented. In relation to FP7, Mr Potočnik determined now as the appropriate time to define a targeted approach to the future and gave his personal commitment that the Commission would explore all available avenues to try and meet EU and Western Balkan common goals. He also indicated how interested he was in seeing proposals for methods to integrate the Western Balkans into the European Research Area (ERA).

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Further information on EU-Western Balkans relations can be found from the DG External Relations website at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/

EC appoints new Deputy Director-General for external relations

On 9 February 2005, the EC decided to appoint Karel Kovanda as the new Deputy Director-General for External Relations. Of Czech nationality, Mr Kovanda is currently his country's Permanent Representative on NATO's North Atlantic Council and represents the Czech Republic in the Western European Union (WEU). He replaces Mr. Fernando Valenzuela Marzo, who will shortly take up function as the Head of Delegation of the EC to the United Nations in New York.

In his new capacity, which he took up mid-February, Mr Kovanda will operate under the political guidance of the Director General Eneko Landaburu and will also act as Political Director for the EC. He has held various positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in his country, was appointed Deputy Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, Ambassador to the United Nations in New York. He was also member of the UN Security Council and contributed significantly to the Working Group for Security Council Reform.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

From the DG External Relations page, available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/

EVENTS and AWARDS

International conference: Advances in stem cell research

An international conference "Advances in stem cell research" will be held in Milan on 6-7 April 2005, at the Università degli studi di Milano.

The conference is organized by the FP6 Integrated Project EuroStemCell (European consortium for stem cell research) and brings together scientists, ethicists, clinicians and legislators. It will include presentations by patients' associations and sessions on the "potential of stem cell research" and "ethical aspects of stem cell research"

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Available from the EuroStemCell website at:

<http://www.eurostemcell.org/News/news.htm#milano>

Slovenian European forum for early career researchers

The Slovenian 'Ad Futura' foundation are working with The Marie Curie Fellowship Association to put on a European forum for early career researchers. The forum will take place in Otocec, Slovenia, on 6 and 7 May 2005 and is designed to bring together early stage researchers and more experienced colleagues together. It is aimed to attract a diverse mix of researchers from across Europe, different disciplines, and those from a broad range of professional backgrounds.

The event will feature workshops covering a broad range of topics, some practical in nature and aimed at developing transferable skills in transferable skills, other workshops will be more science policy oriented.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

available from the Ad Futura website at: <http://www.ad-futura.si/EuroForum/>

CO2 capture and storage conference

A conference on CO2 capture and storage 'Towards zero emission power plants' is to take place in Brussels, Belgium 13 - 15 April 2005. The event is designed to create opportunities for discussion and to help develop a common and coherent European strategy for research and development (R&D) in the field of CO2 capture. The conference should address the international dimension of EU activities in this area and also provide a platform for disseminating project results and promoting networking.

The conference appeals to a diverse range of backgrounds including policy makers, civil society and those from both research and industry communities.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Formal EC announcement of the conference available from the DG Research Website at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/energy/pdf/announcement_en.pdf

NEW PUBLICATIONS and ONLINE RESOURCES

EC webpage on climate change

In support of future proposed EU actions on climate change, the EC has released a new website which focuses on climate change post 2012. The website refers to information on the Kyoto Protocol and discusses how only significant cuts will allow atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations to stabilise at a level that would 'prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system'. The website contains the full communication (Winning the Battle Against Global Climate Change), information on stakeholder consultations, and a number of related reports.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

New webpage on climate change post-2012:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/climat/future_action.htm

New report: structural change, productivity and employment in the new EU Member States

A report on structural change, productivity and employment in the new EU Member States has recently been released. In this recently commissioned study (commissioned by the Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Directorate General), the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) provides an overview of long-term structural developments in the new EU Member States from Central and Eastern Europe (NMS).

The paper analyses structural changes in the NMS economies and pattern of productivity catching up both at macro level and within the individual industries. Notwithstanding fast productivity catching-up, the estimated productivity levels indicate that NMS are in this respect still lagging considerably behind the EU-15 economies. At the same time, the growth of labour productivity went hand in hand with declining employment. The required further productivity convergence with the EU-15 may thus be in conflict with the urgently needed employment growth in the NMS.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

The full report, entitled Structural change, productivity and employment in the new EU Member States (pdf) is available from the wiiw website at:

<http://wiiw66.wsr.ac.at/pdf/RR313>

New eGovernment services

New eGovernment services aimed at opening up access and ease free movement of people, goods and services across Europe were discussed during a conference entitled 'Cross-border eGovernment services for administrations, businesses and citizens' held this month. During the conference, Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen commented that 'businesses and citizens are the core target groups for the new EU eGovernment services. In order to revitalise the Lisbon agenda we need modern public services that eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy'.

The Your Europe portal was presented as a first step towards this new generation of eGovernment services. Your Europe offers already now easily accessible information and services to those mobile citizens and businesses who wish to take full advantage of their European rights and opportunities.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

EC press release reference IP/05/199 at:

<http://europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/199&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

CORDIS

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

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

IGLO Project Search

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

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

EUR-LEX (Official Journal C and L)

This website provides information on EU Law. It includes electronic copies of the Treaties and recent copies of the Official Journal of the European Communities (OJ). The OJ, published daily in eleven languages, consists of two related series, the L series (Legislation) and the C series (Information, notices and preparatory EU legislation), a supplement and an annex. EUR-Lex provides free access to the C and L series of the Official Journal for a period of forty-five days following publication. (The OJ issue with the

Euro exchange rates (L 359, 31/12/1998) is permanently available in PDF format in EUR-Lex). URL: EUR-LEX <http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/index.html>
Official Journal C & L <http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/oj/index.html>
Treaty of Amsterdam <http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/index.html>

EUROPA

EUROPA is the official EU Server. It contains links to the EP, the European Council, the EC and other EU institutions and contains information on EU policies listed by subject area.
URL: <http://www.europa.eu.int/index-en.htm>

RAPID

RAPID is a database giving a daily view of the activities of the EU as presented by the Institutions in their press releases.
EC Press Releases are available at:
<http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh>

GLOSSARY

A&S	Aeronautics and Space Priority (FP6) http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm
C&G	Citizens and Governance Priority (FP6) http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm
COST	European Co-operation in the field of Scientific and Technical Research is a framework for scientific and technical co-operation, allowing the co-ordination of national research on a European level. http://www.netmaniacs.com/cost
'Council'	'Council' refers to the 'Council of Ministers', the principle decision-making body within the European Union. It has both executive and legislative powers, the latter in some cases exercised jointly with the European Parliament (co-decision procedure). The Council is composed of one representative at ministerial level from each Member State. Which Ministers attend each Council meeting varies according to the subject discussed, e.g. The Minister of Science in the UK attends the Research Council. http://ue.eu.int/en/summ.htm
Culture 2000	First European Community Framework Programme in support of

	<p>culture, which runs from 2000/04 (inclusive). http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/culture/index_en.html</p>
EC	<p>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</p>
eEurope	<p>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</p>
EP	<p>The European Parliament - which is made up of elected representatives (MEPs) from all the Member States. It shares decision-making power with the Council in a number of areas including research and education. http://www.europarl.eu.int/sg/tree/en/default.htm</p>
ERA	<p>European Research Area. On 18 January 2000, the EC issued a Communication entitled "Towards a European Research Area" which proposed ways in which research in Europe could be more effectively organised and co-ordinated. http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/area.html</p>
ESC	<p>European Economic and Social Committee is a consultative body made up of representatives of Europe's employers' organisations, trade unions, farmers, consumer groups and professional associations. http://www.ces.eu.int Press Releases: http://www.ces.eu.int/en/acs/fr_acs_press_rels.htm</p>
ESF	<p>European Science Foundation. http://www.esf.org</p>
ESF	<p>The European Social Fund http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/esf/en/index.htm</p>
Eureka	<p>Eureka is a Europe-wide network for Industrial Research and Development. http://www3.eureka.be/Home</p>
FQS	<p>Food Quality and Safety Priority (FP6) http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/activities.htm</p>
FP (FP5, FP6, FP7)	<p>The EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. The Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) was adopted in 1998 and ran until 2002, with FP6 superseding until 2006, with discussions underway on FP7 beyond 2006.</p> <p>Further information on the thematic and horizontal programme composition of FP6 is available at</p>

	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.

 Produced by the United Kingdom Research Office (UKRO)
 for the British Council.

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