

European RTD Insight

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News on EU Research Policy and Programmes

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EU Policy

ERC annual report and projects database

The European Research Council (ERC) has published its annual report on its activities and achievements during 2007. The report has been produced by the ERC Scientific Council, the independent body responsible for developing the ERC strategy, and the EC directorate known as the ERC – Dedicated Implementation Structure (DIS). As well as reviewing the activities and achievements in 2007, the report also provides an analysis of the outcome of the 2007 ERC Starting Grants call, which includes the presentation of preliminary statistics. The report describes the evolution of the ERC grant management system so as to increase transparency and accountability by building on the current good practice and simplifying others where appropriate. The report also outlines the progress made towards establishing the ERC Executive Agency.

The EC has published more detailed information on the first 116 researchers awarded ERC Starting Grants. The information is accessible through the FP7 project database and provides information on the Principal Investigator, the host organisation, the project duration, and details of the funding received.

Further information

The ERC Annual Report is available at: ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/erc-annual-report_en.pdf

Starting grant information is available from the FP7 Cordis project database at:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/projects_en.html

European research infrastructures legal framework

The EC has recently adopted a proposal for a regulation on the legal framework for European Research Infrastructures (ERI). The purpose of the new framework is to set out a legal template to facilitate setting up new research infrastructures. It has been developed in response to requests from Member States and the scientific community in Europe because current legal frameworks under national, EU, or international law do not fully correspond to the specific needs of such multinational infrastructures. An ERI is to be considered an international body and would therefore be exempt from VAT and excise duties. This issue had been a contentious point with previous mechanisms as countries would object to paying for an infrastructure and then for the infrastructure to pay tax in the country where it is situated.

The framework has been developed following consultation work conducted by the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI), which identified a need for a common European legal framework. It is hoped that following adoption by the Council the regulation on the Community legal framework for ERIs could be effective from the middle of 2009.

Further information

The EC proposal for a Research Infrastructures Regulation is available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/research/press/2008/pdf/com_2008_467_en.pdf

Innovative Medicines Initiative proves popular

Figures have just been released on the number of Expressions of Interest (EoI) submitted to the first IMI calls that closed on 15 July 2008. IMI was the first Joint Technology Initiative to launch calls for proposals. In total 150 EoIs were submitted. EoIs were received for all 18 of the topics that appeared in the work programme. They will now be evaluated by peer review committees, and this first stage of the peer review process is expected to be completed by the end of September 2008. At that point one proposal per topic will be invited to join EFPIA industry members to form a 'project consortium', which will develop the full project proposal. These full proposals will be submitted before the deadline at the end of November.

The IPR helpdesk has recently produced a note to explain the similarities and differences between the IPR rules for FP7 and IMI. This note will be of interest to anyone who has applied to the first call for expressions of interest or those wishing to participate in IMI in the future.

Further information

Further information on the number of submissions is available at: http://www.imi-europe.org/news_media/pages/newsdetail.aspx?Item=20&ListId=D8BCC9B1-B29A-4D26-B03B-4D026548CDDF

The IMI website is available at: <http://www.imi-europe.org/Pages/default.aspx>

The IPR policy note is available at: http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org/controlador/recursos/showDocument?len=en&idFicha=0000006670&formato=xml_html&nomFichero=ES_IP_IMI&idFichero=00

EC has opened selection procedure for 'new satellites for Europe'

On 7 August 2008 the EC launched a competition for providers of communication services via satellite across Europe. Previously, there were 27 different national systems that prevented the creation of one single European market in the area. The new EU decision on mobile satellite services, which entered into force in July 2008, will give satellite operators the opportunity to offer services such as high speed data, mobile TV, disaster relief and remote medical services under a single European selection procedure.

Under this single European selection procedure interested companies are requested to present their applications to the EC before 7 October 2008. The first phase of the selection process will focus on the assessment of technical and commercial ability of the candidates to launch their systems in time. The second selection phase includes a range of criteria, such as the following; the speed at which all Member States will be covered, the range of services (including in rural areas), the number of end-users to be served, and the capacity of the system to fulfil public policy objectives and spectrum efficiency. It is expected that the selection procedure will be completed in the first part of 2009, with the first satellite launches taking place later in 2009.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1250 of 7 August 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

Further information is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/ecomms/current/pan_european/index_en.htm

EU gives financial support to the Eurostars Joint Programme

On 2 August 2008, the EU formally gave its support to the Eurostars Joint Programme. The EP and the Council of the EU have established that the FP7 contribution to the Eurostars programme will not exceed €100 million. This allowance will be drawn from the general budget of the European Union allocated to the FP7 Capacities theme called 'Research for the benefit of SMEs', which aims to enhance research and innovation capacities of SMEs throughout Europe.

The Eurostars Joint Programme aims to create an easily accessible and sustainable European Research & Development support mechanism for businesses by primarily funding research and development activities involving one or more SMEs, as well as research organisations, universities, and large companies. In addition, Eurostars will assist enterprises in promoting their technological and business development. The programme will adopt a bottom-up approach, supporting research, development and demonstration activities carried out by trans-national consortia driven by R&D performing SMEs. Where possible, co-operation with research organisations and large enterprises is encouraged. In addition to EC contribution, Member States will pay financial support in the form of lump sums. The EU hopes that Eurostars will be a positive force towards contributing to European competitiveness and innovation, while also contributing to the achievement of the Lisbon and Barcelona objectives.

Further information

Further information is available at: <http://www.eurostars-eureka.eu/>

EC pilots new scheme for open access to research articles

The EC will fund over €50 billion of research during FP7. Therefore, it is extremely keen to see that these research results are disseminated as widely and effectively as possible to guarantee maximum exploitation and impact with researchers and beyond. This is because fast and reliable access to research results, especially on the internet, can drive further innovation, scientific discovery and support the development of a strong knowledge-based economy. Therefore, the EC recently launched a pilot project that will give unrestricted online access to EU-funded research results, primarily for research articles published in peer reviewed journals after an embargo period of 6-12 months (to first allow scientific publishers to gain a return on their investment). This pilot covers around 20 per cent of the FP7 programme budget and is being trialled for research in the FP7 areas of: health, energy, environment, social-economic sciences and humanities, information and communication technologies, science in society and research infrastructures.

This pilot follows on from the EC's February 2007 Communication on 'Scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation' and the subsequent invitation from the EU Council of Research Ministers to experiment with open access in FP7. Since 2006, the EC has

also organised extensive consultations on open access, including a high level stakeholder conference with around 500 participants in February 2007. Many national funding bodies, for example the Wellcome Trust in the UK, already have open access rules and the European Research Council (ERC) Scientific Council have also adopted guidelines for open access in December 2007.

Further Information

EC Press Releases IP/08/1262 and MEMO/08/548 (a FAQ document) of 20 August 2008 are available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

These documents also contain many further useful links.

Europe's new digital library

The EC recently published a new Communication on making digital artefacts available online, across Europe. The Communication presents a vision for a new European Digital Library, which would provide a 'one-stop shop' for access to Europe's cultural heritage in the form of books, music, paintings, films and photographs. The European Digital Library is part of the EC's i2010 initiative to create an inclusive information society. In its recent Communication, the EC stressed that more action is needed from Member States, if this vision is to become a reality. At present, Europe's libraries are estimated to contain 2.5 billion books, of which around one per cent is available in digital form. The EC has committed €120 million in 2009 - 2010 to improving online access.

The EC called for Member States to ensure that sufficient funding is available for digitisation; to address the lack of methods, technologies and experience in the preservation of online information; to work towards implementing commons standards for information access and to address the current problems around copyright issues. Information currently available online includes a digital copy of the Gutenberg bible, recordings of Maria Callas' voice and images of famous paintings, such as the Mona Lisa.

Further information:

EC Press Release IP/08/1255 of 11 August 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

New IPR strategy for Europe

The EC recently adopted a Communication on a new industrial property rights (IPR) strategy for Europe. This Communication outlines a number of actions as the keystone to maintain a high quality industrial property rights system for the EU in the 21st century. It aims to support inventors in making informed choices on the protection of their industrial property rights and calls for robust enforcement against counterfeiting and piracy.

The Communication provides a horizontal strategy across the spectrum of different industrial property rights and includes initiatives on enforcement, innovation support for small and medium-sized enterprises, and the quality of industrial property rights. It complements the 2007 Communication on the patent system, which set out a way forward towards the adoption of a Community patent and an integrated EU-wide jurisdiction for patents. As a result of the Communication the EC plans to improve coordination between key enforcement actors at a national level, and will work towards effective cooperation between Member States in intelligence gathering and rapid information exchange on counterfeit and pirated goods. The EC has also planned studies on the quality of the patent system and on the overall functioning of the trademark systems in the EU.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1157 of 16 August 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

Organic farming campaign launched

The EC has launched a new organic farming campaign under the slogan: 'Organic farming. Good for nature, good for you'. The campaign was launched at the Foire de Libramont agricultural fair in Belgium and aims to increase consumer awareness and recognition of organic products. There has been recent, strong growth in the numbers of organic farmers, producers, processors, and importers with a 13.4 per cent growth between the years 2004 and 2005. The retail market growth has varied between five and thirty per cent depending on the Member State. This consequently leads to further opportunities for farmers and processors.

At the launch event the EC unveiled the centrepiece of their campaign which is a new multilingual website for organic farming. The website includes an electronic 'toolbox' to provide marketing materials in 22 languages free of charge to professionals throughout the entire food and farming sector to promote organic production and farming. The campaign is within the framework of the European Action Plan for Organic Food and Farming. This plan sets out 21 initiatives for developing the organic food market and improving standards by increasing efficiency and transparency and therefore increasing consumer confidence.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1209 of 25 July 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

The campaign website is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/home_en

Improved co-operation in times of crisis

DG Environment has introduced the Community Civil Protection Mechanism (CCPM), which is an instrument that aims to enhance Community co-operation in cases of national emergency and in situations where there is an imminent threat of a major emergency. Both EU and non-EU countries affected by a disaster can ask for the support of the CCPM. The mechanism may be activated if a country is overwhelmed by the scale of a disaster and requests assistance.

The aim of CCPM is to improve the protection of people, their environment, property and cultural heritage in the event of major natural or man-made disasters occurring either within or outside the EU. Community co-operation enables the pooling of resources and maximises the combined European effort on site. The CCPM consists of the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) and a programme of training and simulation exercises which facilitate both adequate preparedness and effective response to disasters at Community level. DG Environment is responsible for the 24-hour-a-day operation of the MIC, which gives countries access to a platform, a 'one-stop-shop' of civil protection resources that are available in the participating states. There are 30 participating countries at the moment: the 27 current Member States of the European Union, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Further information

EC Press Release MEMO/08/534 of 5 August 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

Further information is available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/civil/prote/mechanism.htm>

Research infrastructures database launched

The EC has launched the 'European Portal on Research Infrastructures', which is an online database. It is hoped that it will assist the EC and Member States in gaining a better overview and

understanding of the current landscape for research infrastructures in Europe. It is further hoped that this information will assist with the future planning for the requirements of the research communities in Europe. The starting point for the database was those infrastructures that replied to the 2006-2007 Research Infrastructures survey conducted by the EC and the European Science Foundation (ESF) and which they validated as being of European-wide interest.

Since the database was constructed from information provided by questionnaire respondents it is not currently exhaustive. Research infrastructures not currently listed can submit an application and if they are recognised as being of European-wide interest they will be added to the database. Furthermore infrastructures whose details are out of date can submit an update. There are two kinds of search function that can be utilised: either by using free text or by selecting the required country, major scientific domain and then the domain's sub-category.

Further information

The European Portal on Research Infrastructures is available at: <http://www.riportal.eu/>

FP6 project information dissemination

The EC has set up a new system called the Project Information and Dissemination Service (PIDS) with the aim of increasing the visibility of the outcome of FP6 projects. The PIDS system is a central information point which allows project coordinators and EC project officers to find information on their projects, store the projects public outputs such as news and results, and disseminate this public outputs through Cordis services. FP6 projects can be uploaded to PIDS so long as the project details have already been entered into the ECs project database by EC officials.

It is possible to add public outputs for every project which is entered into PIDS. When new public output is entered the project officer receives an email notification in order to validate the public output. Public outputs such as results, news, events or documents can be added to at anytime during the projects lifetime. Those project details which have public status can then be disseminated to Cordis services such as the results database, events and news, and the library for documents.

Further information

The PIDS service is available at: <http://cordis.europa.eu/pids/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.home>

New Earth observation programme

The European Space Agency (ESA) has launched a new programme in support of Earth observation science as part of the Earth Observation Envelope Programme: the Support to Science Element (STSE). The programme is to provide support to both future and on-going missions by taking a role in the formulation of mission concepts and providing support to the science. The programme will receive €25 million over five years and will be implemented through four main action lines.

The action line for future mission concepts will support the development of novel mission concepts and the scientific agenda. A further action line will be novel observations and products which will have the aim of contributing to the development of novel and improved data observations and multi-mission based products by exploiting ESA and non-ESA assets. The support to Earth science action line will stimulate and support scientists to improve our understanding of the Earth's system by responding to the needs of key international scientific programmes. Finally there will be strategic action lines which will have the aim of contributing to the ESA Earth science strategy by providing a fast response to key strategic scientific needs where ESA data may contribute. The first invitations to tender have already been issued and further details can be found on the STSE website.

Further information

Further information on the STSE programme and invitations to tender is available at: <http://dup.esrin.esa.int/STSE/index.asp>

LIFE+ calls now open

LIFE+ is the new funding instrument that replaced the previous DG Environment LIFE schemes, which had been running in various forms since 1992. With a total budget of over €2 billion it provides financial support for projects that contribute to the development, updating and implementation of EU environmental policy. The 2008 call for proposals has recently opened and this covers three broad themes. The first is 'LIFE+ nature and biodiversity', which aims to protect, conserve, restore, monitor and facilitate the functioning of natural systems, natural habitats, wild flora and fauna. It also aims to halt the loss of biodiversity, including diversity of genetic resources, within the EU by 2010.

The second theme is 'LIFE+ environment policy and governance' and this aims to stabilise greenhouse gas concentration at a level that prevents global warming above 2°C. The final theme is 'LIFE+ information and communication' and this aims to fund projects that disseminate information and raise awareness on environmental issues, including forest fire prevention. It also aims to provide support for accompanying measures, such as information, communication actions and campaigns, conferences and training, including training on forest fire prevention. The deadline for applicants to send proposals to Member States' authorities is 21 November 2008.

Further information

More information including the application guidelines and application forms can be found on the LIFE website: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/lifeplus.htm>

It is also possible to contact the relevant national authorities for each Member State, which are listed here: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/contact/nationalcontact/index.htm>

Marco Polo: results of calls now published

Marco Polo is the EU's programme to shift freight transport from the road and on to sea, rail and inland waterways instead. The EC has published the final list of the successful projects from the 2007 call. A total of 23 proposals were chosen, out of over 50 proposals submitted. The total value of these projects is €50 million. Contracts with the EC are being signed at present and a press release lists all of the successful projects, the budget for each and all of the partners involved. The selected projects include a long distance rail link between Ghent in Belgium and Istanbul in Turkey, a maritime link between Livorno in Italy and Barcelona in Spain and a rail service between Lübeck, Germany and Gothenburg, Sweden.

At the same time, the EC has also released preliminary statistics for the 2008 calls. This includes figures on the breakdown of proposals into each transport mode. Of the 31 proposals that were evaluated successfully, 59 per cent related to railways, 20.5 per cent combined railway and shipping, 18 per cent were for 'motorways of the sea' and short-sea shipping, and 2.5 per cent were for inland waterways.

Further information

The full list of 2007 awards is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/transport/marcopolo/projects/docs/call07_projects.pdf

Further information on the breakdown of the 2008 results is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/transport/marcopolo/home/docs/mp_newsalert3.pdf

The EC's Marco Polo website is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/transport/marcopolo/home/home_en.htm

SEREN – new co-ordination action for FP7 security national contact point

A new co-ordination action entitled the 'SEcurity REsearch NCP network' (SEREN) was recently established for the FP7 Security National Contact Points (NCPs). SEREN was established to link together the different NCPs of the FP7 security theme and improve the quality of the NCP network. SEREN members are expected to deliver a high level of services to the Security research community. Overall, SEREN is working towards the development of an established NCP network in security research.

In addition, SEREN will provide a partner search database to facilitate the development of consortia under the FP7 Security theme. SEREN is also coordinating the brokerage event of the 3 European Security Research Conference - SRC'08 to be held on 29 September 2008, for which registration is made through their website. This event is aimed at enabling exchange of information between organisations presenting proposal ideas and interested participants.

Further information

Additional information about SEREN is available at: <http://www.seren-project.eu>

Additional details and the registration form for the SEREN brokerage event is available at: http://www.seren-project.eu//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=44&Itemid=2

Research funding into malaria treatment, vaccines, and ethics in Africa

The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) has recently launched a call for proposals which are worth more than €150 million for funding research into HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. The latest calls are focused on clinical trials, capacity development and networking in Malaria vaccines development, and malaria treatments, as well as the strengthening of African national ethics committees or institutional review boards.

The EDCTP was created in 2003 as a European response to the global crisis caused by HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis which are the three main poverty related diseases. The partnership is between European and sub-Saharan African countries and aims to accelerate the development of drugs, vaccines and microbicides, focusing on phase I and phase II of clinical trials. Current call proposals have to be submitted by 30 November 2008.

Further information

Further information on EDCTP and current calls is available at: <http://www.edctp.org>

EC consults on post-2012 agreement on climate change

One of the big issues of our time is how the world will approach climate change after the current Kyoto Protocol agreement targets end in 2012. The Kyoto Protocol was a vital first step in addressing the serious threat of climate change. As part of this, the EU committed itself to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by eight per cent (compared to 1990 levels) between 2008 and 2012. However, the time has now come to consider the action plan beyond 2012. This was discussed in December 2007 at the UN conference on climate change where participating countries set out an action plan for an agreement on a post 2012 framework, which should be completed by 2009.

Therefore, the EC has recently launched a consultation on the EU's approach to a global climate change agreement up to and beyond 2012. It discusses: mid-term emission reduction targets for developed countries; greater collaboration on emission reduction actions for developing countries; and adaptation to climate change with the support of technology and finance. This consultation also follows the EC's Communication on 'limiting global climate change to 2°C: the way ahead for

2020 and beyond'. The results will help shape the EU's position on the global post-2012 agreement. A conference for stakeholders is planned for autumn this year.

Further Information

EC Press Release IP/08/1279 of 4 August 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid>

The online consultation questionnaire is open until 29 September at:
<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=climatepost2012>

More information about climate change is available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/home_en.htm

Research News

Researchers uncover the secrets of the centre of our planet

In work partly funded by the EU through a Marie Curie fellowship, French and US researchers have increased our understanding of the processes taking place at the centre of the Earth whilst investigating how the different layers of the Earth interact with each other. In the middle of the Earth is our planet's inner core which consists of a ball of solid iron 2,400 metres in diameter. It is this core where the Earth's magnetic field is generated. Research has shown that this inner core is not symmetrical, but until now the reasons for this asymmetry were a mystery.

The inner core is surrounded by a liquid outer core, then the mantle and then the outer crust. The latest research suggests that the asymmetry in the inner core could be due to variations in temperature and chemical composition in the Earth's mantle and inner core being transferred by the liquid outer core - which is between the mantle and inner core. Actually, like in the Earth's atmosphere, the Earth's core is subjected to forces that are caused by the rotation of the Earth, and the lateral temperature differences give rise to 'thermal winds', similar to those which exist where the land meets the sea.

Further Information

More information is available at: <http://www.nature.com/nature> and <http://www.cnrs.fr>

New radio frequency just for cars

In 2006 the EC launched the Intelligent Car Initiative, which promotes the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to achieve smarter, safer and cleaner road transport. As part of this initiative the EC has reserved part of the radio spectrum for smart vehicle communications systems (so called co-operative systems). The reserved single EU-wide frequency band can be used for immediate and reliable communication between cars, and between cars and roadside infrastructure. It is 30 MHz of spectrum in the 5.9 Gigahertz (GHz) band which will be allocated within the next six months by national authorities across Europe to road safety applications, without barring other services already in place (such as radio amateur services).

These are based on wireless communication technology and allow cars to 'talk' to other cars and to the road infrastructure providers. For example, if a car, equipped with a cooperative car-to-car communication device, detects a slippery patch on a road, it can deliver this information using the 5.9 GHz band to all cars located nearby. Therefore, it can warn other drivers of the slippery road, or, for instance, a crash or other hazard. If a traffic management centre needs to inform drivers about a sudden road closure, the alternative route to take or speed limits. It will also be able to send this information to a transmitter detector along the respective road, which then passes it on to the vehicles driving by. Smart vehicle communication systems have the potential to increase safety and ease the lives of Europe's drivers: in 2006, more than 42,000 people died in road accidents in

the EU and more than 1.6 million were injured while every day there are some 7,500 km of traffic jams on the EU's roads. The EC hope this decision will facilitate the development and testing of road safety related applications in the EU by providing a common and long term spectrum access to the automotive industry and road operators, and encourage further funding in this area.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1240 of 5 August 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

Resistant prions

Researchers have discovered that Prions, the pathogens that cause scrapie in sheep, can survive in the ground for several years and animals can become infected via contaminated pastures. Scrapie is an infectious disease in which prions destroy the animal's brain. It is difficult to contain the disease – often, scrapie will break out again after it has apparently been eradicated. The results from a research study indicate that fresh incidences of scrapie among sheep are due to contaminated pastures. It is not yet known whether the pathogens that cause BSE and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) are equally resistant.

The researchers asked whether prions are transmitted by the environment – perhaps by the pastures and how long prions persist in the ground. Together with scientists from the Robert Koch Institute in Berlin and the Friedrich Loeffler Institute (Federal Research Institute for Animal Health) on the island of Riems, research scientists from the Fraunhofer Institute for Molecular Biology and Applied Ecology IME investigated these questions on behalf of the German Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety BMU.

Further information

More details on this study are available from:

<http://cordis.europa.eu/wire/index.cfm?fuseaction=article.Detail&rcn=17711>

EU project taking CO2 out of the atmosphere

The accumulation of CO₂ is considered to be the main cause of climate change. However, the EU-backed project CO₂SINK, with financing to the tune of €8.7 million, aims to reduce greenhouse emissions through CO₂ sinks - in other words - storing it underground. "The European Commission is committed to encouraging industry to reduce its carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and research plays a vital role in that," according to the European Science and Research Commissioner, Janez Potočnik.

The CO₂SINK integrated project is supported by FP6 and aims to develop the basis for CO₂ capture and geological storage. This will be achieved by injecting CO₂ into a saline aquifer near the town of Ketzin, west of Berlin. Up to 60,000 tons will be stored more than 600 metres deep during the next 2 years. CO₂SINK aims to make full use of the physical properties of CO₂ and the changes it undergoes at extreme pressures. At the pressures encountered deep underground, CO₂ is dense and behaves more like a liquid than a gas. This means that large quantities can be stored in a relatively small volume. Most of what is stored in this manner occupies the spaces in porous rock.

Further information

More details on this project are available at:

http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_LANG=EN&N_RCN=29703

Cool for cars

B-COOL is an FP6-funded project that has developed a low-cost air conditioning system for small cars. It uses liquid CO₂ as a refrigerant rather than hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which contribute to global warming. The project is worth a total of around €4.5 million with €2.5 of this being provided by the EC. Due to end in November 2008, B-COOL involves partners from several European countries including Luxembourg, France, Denmark, Norway, and Germany.

The project co-ordinator, Carloandrea Malvicino, of Fiat in Italy, stated, "We've managed to make some important advances in the domain of the mobile air conditioning systems. We've developed new testing procedures to assess fuel consumption and thermal performance of CO₂ air conditioning technologies, and we've created and tested two vehicle demonstrators using a Fiat Panda and a Ford Ka". The take-up of liquid CO₂ air conditioning systems in smaller cars has previously been slow due to cost and energy consumption constraints. The new B-COOL system, however, should remove that bottleneck as it is far more cost effective and energy efficient. In terms of environmental benefits, it has also completely eliminated the need for CFC and HFC refrigerants.

Further information

Further details about the B-COOL project are available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/transport/projects/article_4981_en.html

Cosmic rays and climate change

A collaborative project has been granted €2.3 million, under FP7, to examine the influence of cosmic radiation on the Earth's climate. The collaboration is an Initial Training Network (ITN) which is part of the Marie Curie Actions. The project is entitled 'Cosmic rays leaving outdoor droplets' which is shortened to CLOUD-ITN, and is coordinated by Goethe University of Frankfurt with most of the work conducted at CERN. However, other partners include the Paul Scherrer Institute (Switzerland), the universities of Helsinki (Finland), Leeds and Reading (UK), and Vienna (Austria), the Institute for Tropospheric Research in Leipzig (Germany), and Ionicon Analytik in Innsbruck (Austria). Institutions in Portugal and Bulgaria have also joined the network and a Russian institution is participating through its own national funding.

Whilst changes in solar irradiance have been assumed to contribute little to climate change, the effects of changes in UV radiation or galactic cosmic rays have in fact never been quantified. The CLOUD-ITN collaboration has developed an aerosol chamber with which to simulate the effects of cosmic rays on aerosol and cloud formation. A broad range of physics experiments will be conducted over the next few years leading to a new and improved facility.

Further information

Further details are available from the project website at: http://www.uni-frankfurt.de/english/research/inter_projects/clouditn/index.html

Education, Training and Culture

Members of the EIT Governing Board announced

The EC recently officially appointed the 18 members of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Governing Board (GB), following consultation with EP and Council. The 18

members were selected by an independent identification committee set up by the EC, in a process that also saw a two-stage public consultation on selecting the GB members.

The 18 members of the GB will serve in a personal capacity. Once the EIT is up and running, they will be joined by four 'representative' GB members, representing the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) that will make up the EIT, and the central EIT structure. The Governing Board includes one member from the UK; Professor Julia King, Vice Chancellor of Aston University.

Further information

EC Press release IP/08/1220 of 30 August 2008, available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

Further information on the EIT is also available at <http://ec.europa.eu/eit/>

The Slovenian Presidency press release is available at:

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/June/0618MVZTeit.html

Israel and the EU deepen education and training co-operation

Israel and the EC have signed a Joint Declaration on co-operation and dialogue in education and training. The EC and the Israeli Government want to launch an enhanced policy dialogue on greater compatibility of education systems and to increase educational mobility and exchanges through the EU's Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes. The declaration will be an effective tool to contribute to the objectives of the 2005 Action Plan under the European Neighbourhood Policy, namely to integrate Israel into European policies and programmes.

The joint declaration marks the start of more regular dialogues on the modernisation agenda for higher education, including; the Bologna process, vocational training aspects covered by the Copenhagen process, lifelong learning policies, school twinning, language learning, means of promoting the transferability and recognition of qualifications, as well as of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The two parties also intend to increase inter-university co-operation through the new generations of the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programmes.

Further information

The text of the Joint Declaration is available here:

<http://www.delisr.ec.europa.eu/English/whatsnew.asp?id=1017>

Analysis, evaluation, and impact assessment of cultural policies

The EU's Culture programme, which falls under the auspices of DG Education and Culture (DG EAC) contains a sub-strand which directly concerns regional or local public authorities as well as cultural departments of universities. The objective is to fund groups of stakeholders who have direct and practical experience of the analysis, evaluation, or impact assessment of cultural policies.

The cultural policies, for which the stakeholder should have experience, include the mobility of artists and other professionals, the promotion of access to culture and the greater mobility of collections, developing data, statistics and methodologies relevant to the cultural sector, maximising the potential of the creative industries, and promoting and implementing the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Support will be provided for the groups of stakeholders to exchange and compare existing data and evaluation methodologies and to produce new methodologies and data, and to provide EU wide dissemination of results. The closing date for proposals is 1 November 2008.

Further information

Further information is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/news/news1647_en.htm

External Collaboration

EC science and technology China pilot project

China is one of the largest investors in R&D and is becoming one of the most important centres in this area, the EC has thus launched the Science and Technology China (STF China) pilot project in order to promote EU-China co-operation in research. STF China aims at building bridges between EU and China technology domains by promoting mobility of EU researchers towards the Chinese R&D area to successfully develop meaningful and long-lasting contact. It also seeks to create and sustain links and research partnerships between EU and Chinese research institutions.

The pilot phase of STF China consists of two intakes of 15 researchers, each in Chinese institutions. Each intake is planned for 24 months, including a six-month tailor-made Chinese language and research culture training in Beijing followed by an 18-month practical research period in a Chinese host organisation. The deadline for the first intake was 20 June 2008 and the deadline for the second intake is 5 September 2008. These first two intakes constitute a Preparatory Action which will allow the EC to prepare proposals with a view to the adoption of future actions of this kind.

Further information

Further details on the STF China are available at: <http://www.euchinastf.eu/>

INCO-NET projects publicised

The EC has recently published a booklet highlighting all of the six previous INCO-NET projects that have been funded through the first call. INCO-NET projects are large networks funded through the International Co-operation theme of the FP7 Capacities programme. They are there to establish priority setting and the support of the S&T policy dialogue between the EU and other regions of the world. They are four year projects that will involve research administrations, the research community, industry and other stakeholders from both Member States and third countries. The projects are expected to provide the EC with the necessary inputs and evidence to support future S&T co-operation policies, including the preparation of future FP7 work programmes.

The six funded projects cover the following world regions: the Western Balkans; Mediterranean partner countries; Eastern Europe and Central Asia; South East Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa; and Latin America. All of these projects are presented in the new booklet. The booklet includes details of the EC contribution, the full name of the project, details of the partners and a detailed outline of the aims and implementation activities.

Further information

The INCO-NET publication is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/978-92-79-08080-7_en.pdf

The EC's pages on International Co-operation are available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm>

Events and Awards

Conference on the future of innovation

The International Society for Professional Innovation Management (ISPIM) organised an annual conference to facilitate discussion around innovation management. The 2009 conference takes place in Vienna, Austria, on 21 - 24 June 2009. The conference will be hosted by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber with support from the European Programme for Training, Research and Technology and Ration Strategy and Innovation Consulting (DANUBE). The conference will include contributions from actors in a range of different sectors, addressing the following issues: commercialising and financing innovation; methods and tools for innovation; organisational creativity and idea generation; and networks and clusters of innovation.

Further information

Additional information on the conference is available from <http://www.ispim.org/conference/>

Third Fraunhofer life science symposium

The third Fraunhofer life science symposium will be held in Leipzig, Germany on 24 - 25 October 2008. The main themes of the conference are ischemia and regeneration. The symposium is organised and hosted by the Fraunhofer Institute for Cell Therapy and Immunology. The programme will cover regeneration in cardiac and cerebral ischemia and in particular there will be a focus on stem cells and their use for ischemic diseases and other applications. The second day of the symposium concerns process development for cell based therapies as well as monitoring and imaging of ischemic diseases. The programme includes networking opportunities with industrial partners, a poster exhibition in the light-flooded atrium of the newly opened Fraunhofer Institute for Cell Therapy and Immunology. The organisers expect approximately 150-200 people to attend this year.

Further information

Further information is available at: <http://www.fs-leipzig.com>

Sustainable nuclear energy technology platform general assembly

The Sustainable Nuclear Energy Technology Platform has organised its first general assembly to take place in the EC's Charlemagne building in Brussels on 26 November 2008. The exact programme is still in preparation, however, three sessions are foreseen. The first session is expected to be a report by the governing board, a presentation on the strategic research agenda and deployment strategy, and proposals in the areas of education, training and knowledge management. The second session will involve the status of EC plans, a proposal to support R&D for current and future light water reactors, and a proposal for a European industrial initiative for sustainable fission. The final session will be a round table discussion on funding R&D in nuclear fission.

Those who wish to attend the general assembly should register before 30 September 2008. Registration can be done through the Sustainable Nuclear Energy Technology Platform website where updates to the programme will also be posted.

Further information

Further information is available in the 'Future Events' section of the Sustainable Nuclear Energy Technology Platform website at: <http://www.snetp.eu>

Manufuture Conference 2008

The 2008 Manufuture Conference is taking place in St Etienne, France, on 8-9 December as part of the French Presidency of the EU. Manufuture is the European Technology Platform for the manufacturing sector. This is the sixth Manufuture conference, with last year's event being held in Lisbon during the Portuguese Presidency of the EU. The theme of this year's conference is 'European regions and SMEs for implementing manufacturing strategic priorities'.

The event will focus on the future of manufacturing in Europe and will enable delegates to discuss the strategies and roadmaps developed by the Manufuture Technology Platform within industries, largely dominated by SMEs. It will elaborate upon how European SMEs and regional initiatives such as technological or sectoral clusters, public instances and funding programmes, can efficiently contribute to this objective. Herbert Von Bose, the Director of the Industrial Technologies Directorate of DG Research will be present. It will be attended by major stakeholders from academia, industry, government and research institutes.

Further information

Further information about the conference is available from the following website:

www.manufuture2008.eu

The Manufuture Technology Platform website is available at: <http://www.manufuture.org/>

New Publications and Online Resources

New CORDIS website for Article 169 initiatives

CORDIS, which is the EC's website for research, has launched a new service providing detailed information on the four Article 169 Initiatives. These Article 169 initiatives, which are supported financially through FP7, aim to integrate Member States' national research efforts, thus pooling resources and preventing duplication. The four initiatives planned so far are as follows: Ambient Assisted Living (AAL), a joint research programme on ICT for assisted living; Eurostars, a joint research programme for research-performing SMEs and their partners; Bonus-169, a joint research programme in the field of Baltic Sea research; and the European Metrology Research Programme (EMRP), which is a joint research programme in the field of Metrology. AAL and Eurostars initiatives have already been given the go-ahead, but the final go-ahead for EMPR and Bonus-169 will come later in 2008 and 2009.

The new Article 169 website provides detailed background information on all four initiatives as well as links to their individual websites. Fifteen of the most frequently asked questions have been anticipated and answers prepared, with further information available for download. Finally, a newsroom summarises the latest news and developments related to these initiatives. The website will be updated continuously as the Article 169 initiatives develop.

Further information

The new Article 169 website is available at:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/art169/home_en.html

New publication on EU-funded health research

The EC has published a new booklet on EU health research entitled 'European research for a healthier future'. This publication presents an overview of the main areas of EU-funded health research, including genomics and system biology, medical research, infectious diseases and epidemics, public health and health biotechnology. It features outlines of the priorities under each theme and showcases some of the main achievements. The publication also includes dedicated sections providing more information on overarching issues, including international scientific co-operation, ethics, small and medium-sized enterprises, innovative medicines initiative (IMI), and promoting health across generations, evaluation and management of proposals.

This publication will be of interest to potential applicants as well as individuals wishing to find out more about the type of research funded in this area.

Further information

The EC publication can be downloaded at: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/health/library_en.html

CORDIS

CORDIS is the official Community Research and Development Information Service for science, research and innovation provided by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. The interactive website offers daily news and detailed information on the EU's research programmes.

URL: <http://cordis.europa.eu>

IGLO Project Search

The IGLO Project Service offers a forum for publishing and disseminating details of proposed FP7 projects and/or research skills offered. The service enables 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 EU treaties and recent copies of the Official Journal of the European Communities (OJ). The OJ, published daily in 23 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 45 days following publication. (The OJ issue with the Euro exchange rates (L 359, 31/12/1998) is permanently available in PDF format on EUR-LEX).

URL: EUR-LEX <http://www.europa.eu/eur-lex>

Official Journals C and L <http://www.europa.eu/eur-lex/en/oj>

Treaty of Amsterdam <http://www.europa.eu/eur-lex/en/treaties>

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>

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://europa.eu/rapid>

cubed... from the British Council

cubed, the monthly webzine from the British Council discusses the science that's shaping our society and bringing a new dimension to everyday life. It brings the latest innovations in fashion and music, design and digital, film and life, and the products and ideas that will change our world.

Visit: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/science-cubed.htm>

Talking Science

Created by the British Council, the Talking Science website provides up-to-date information and links to the latest ideas in science communication in the UK: www.britishcouncil.org/talkingscience

GLOSSARY

Capacities

Capacities is the fourth Specific Programme of FP7 and is worth over €4 billion from 2007 to 2013. It aims to enhance research capacities throughout Europe and ensure their optimal use. It is made up of the following broad areas: Research Infrastructures; Research for the Benefit of SMEs; Regions of Knowledge; Research Potential for the Benefit of Convergence Regions; Science in Society; Support to Coherent Development of Research Policies; and International Co-operation.

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/capacities>

CIP

The Competitiveness and Innovation Programme will run from 2007 to 2013. With a budget of €3.6 billion, it is made up of three Specific Programmes: the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme; the ICT Policy Support Programme; and the Intelligent Energy-Europe Programme

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/cip>

Co-operation

Co-operation is the first Specific Programme of FP7. Worth over €30 billion between 2007 and 2013, it is made up of ten thematic areas: Health; Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology; Information Communications Technology (ICT); Nanosciences, Nanomaterials, Materials and New Production Technologies; Energy; Environment; Transport; Socio-economic Sciences and the Humanities; Space; and Security.

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/cooperation>

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.cost.esf.org>

'Council'

'Council' refers to the 'Council of Ministers', the principal 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://consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?lang=en

EC

The European Commission - made up of 27 commissioners nominated by the member states - both initiates proposals for EU legislation and executes EU policies and actions.

<http://ec.europa.eu>

EP

The European Parliament 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.europa.eu/news/public/default_en.htm

ERA

European Research Area. On 18 January 2000 the EC issued a communication entitled 'Towards a European Research Area' that proposed ways in which research in Europe could be more effectively organised and co-ordinated.

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/era>

ERC

The European Research Council, which is the Ideas Specific Programme of FP7, is worth over €7 billion from 2007 to 2013. New to the Framework Programme, the ERC will fund investigator-led, frontier research. It consists of two grant schemes, the Starting Independent Researcher Grant and the Advanced Investigator Grant.

<http://erc.europa.eu>

ESA

The European Space Agency is responsible for designing and developing the European space programme. The Agency's projects are designed to find out more about the Earth, its immediate space environment, the solar system and the universe, as well as to develop satellite-based technologies and services, and to promote European industries.

<http://www.esa.int>

ESC

The 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://eesc.europa.eu>

ESF

European Science Foundation

<http://www.esf.org>

ESF

The European Social Fund, part of the EU's Structural Funds

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf2000/index_en.html

ETP

European Technology Platforms are stakeholder groupings, led by industry, that help to define research and development priorities, timeframes and action plans on a number of strategically important issues.

http://ec.europa.eu/research/energy/nn/nn_rt/nn_rt_hlg/article_1262_en.htm

Euratom

The European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) was set up in 1957 and is legally separate from the European Community. Euratom will have €2.7 billion from FP7 to fund nuclear research and training activities between 2007 and 2011.

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/euratom>

Eureka

Eureka is a Europe-wide network for industrial research and development.

<http://www.eureka.be>

FP (FP5, FP6, FP7)

The EU's Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. The Fifth Framework Programme (FP5) was adopted in 1998 and ran until 2002, with FP6 then running from 2002 to 2006, and FP7 running from 2007 to 2013. The budget for FP7 is over €50 billion.

Further information on the thematic and horizontal programme composition of FP6 is available at:

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp6>

Further information on FP7 can be found at: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7>

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.

ICPC

An International Co-operation Partner Country is an economically less developed country, which is not an EU member state or associated state. ICPC partners can participate in FP7 projects and receive funding.

Ideas

Ideas is the second Specific Programme of FP7 worth over €7 billion from 2007 to 2013. New to the Framework Programme, Ideas will fund investigator-led, frontier research. It is implemented through the European Research Council and consists of two grant schemes, the Starting Independent Researcher Grant and the Advanced Investigator Grant.

<http://erc.europa.eu>

ITRE

The European Parliament Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy (FP7)

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/itre_home_en.htm

JRC

The EC's Joint Research Centre acts 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>

LLP

The Lifelong Learning Programme is made up of four pillars: the Comenius programme for pupils, teachers and schools; the Erasmus programme for students, scholars, professors and universities; the Leonardo da Vinci programme for apprentices, workers and employees; and the Grundtvig programme for adults and teachers and related organisations. There is also a transversal programme (for policy development, languages, information and communication technology) and the Jean Monet programme (dealing with issues relating to European integration, European institutions and associations in the fields of education and training).

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/static/en/llp/index_en.htm

Marie Curie Actions

The Marie Curie Actions make up People, the third Specific Programme of FP7, which is worth over €4 billion during the period from 2007 to 2013. The Marie Curie Actions aim to improve the quality of human resources in European research through training and trans-national mobility of researchers.

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/home_en.html

MEDIA

The MEDIA Programme aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the European audiovisual industry.

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/media/index_en.html

NATO

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

<http://www.nato.int>

People

The third Specific Programme of FP7 is worth over €4 billion during the period from 2007 to 2013. Made up of the Marie Curie Actions, it aims to improve the quality of human resources in European research through training and trans-national mobility of researchers.

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/home_en.html

RTD

Research and Technological Development

SICA

Specific International Co-operation Actions are FP7 call topics where a partner from an ICPC country has to be involved.

SME

Small and medium sized enterprises

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/index_en.htm

Specific Programme

FP7 is made up of seven Specific Programmes: Co-operation; Ideas (implemented through the European Research Council); People (the Marie Curie Actions); Capacities; the Joint Research Centre (JRC); Euratom and the JRC implementing Euratom.

SSH

Socio-economic Sciences and the Humanities is the eighth theme of the FP7 Co-operation Specific Programme.

Treaty of Amsterdam

The Treaty of Amsterdam was signed in October 1997 and entered into force on 1 May 1999.

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

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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