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News on EU Research Policy and Programmes

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EU Policy

Latest round of FP7 calls open

The latest round of FP7 calls opened on 3 September 2008. All of the supporting documentation needed to submit an application, such as the Work Programmes and Guides for Applicants for each topic, are available on the EU's Cordis website. The following themes within the Co-operation pillar of FP7 have all opened calls recently: Health; Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology (FAFB); Energy; Environment; Socio-economic Science and Humanities; Space; and Security. A joint call (between FAFB; Nanosciences, Nanotechnologies, Materials and New Production Technologies; Energy; and Environment) on bio-refineries has also opened. Most call deadlines are in late 2008 with some in early 2009. Within the Capacities pillar there are calls open for; Research for SMEs; Regions of Knowledge; Science in Society; and International Cooperation. Again the deadlines are for late 2008 or early 2009.

Whilst there are no open calls for the Marie Curie pillar of FP7 the Work Programme for 2009 has been released which details when the calls will open and close. The calls for Reintegration Grants, International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES), individual fellowships, and the Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPPs), are due to be published in October, November, March, and April respectively. The call for the European Research Council's Starting Grant call for 2008 is already open, the deadline for the physical sciences and engineering panel is 29 October 2008, social sciences and humanities closes on the 19 November and life sciences closes on the 10 December.

Further information

A full list of all of the calls that have opened, including the supporting documentation, is available from: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>

EC opens new call on bio-refineries

One of the new FP7 calls that opened on 3 September is on the topic of bio-refineries. As outlined above, the call brings together funding from the following four themes of FP7: Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology (FAFB), Nanosciences, Nanotechnologies, Materials and New Production Technologies (NMP), Energy and Environment. It is the first time that this has been called for and the aim of the main topic within the call is to develop and integrate innovative technologies to prove the viability of advanced bio-refineries in the context of the whole value chain.

The EC organised an information day in Brussels on 12 September for potential participants to this call. The event saw Janez Potočnik, the EU Commissioner for Research, give the opening speech. It was followed by a detailed presentation about the call which included details of how to get involved. A session in the afternoon allowed participants to network and find potential partners for their projects. The EC has summarised the details of those looking for partners in an information booklet and this has been made available online, alongside the presentation from the event. It contains details of over 40 academics and institutions looking to participate in the call.

Further information

The info day website, which includes Commissioner Potočnik's speech, the presentation and the information booklet, is available at:

http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/rtd/susbioref/library?!=biorefinery_info&vm=detailed&sb=Title

New EU strategy for marine and maritime research

The EC has recently published its strategy for marine and maritime research. The new strategy aims to overcome fragmentation of the European marine and maritime research landscape by capacity building, increased integration across traditional research sectors and increased cooperation of all actors in this area. The strategy itself is entitled 'A European Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research'. It has been developed by several areas of the EC, particularly DG Research and DG Fisheries. Joe Borg, the Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries said, 'This strategy is an essential pillar of the EU Maritime Policy. It is indispensable to allow us to realise the full potential of sea-based activities in an environmentally sustainable manner'.

The strategy proposes a series of concrete actions, which includes: developing capacity building in terms of innovation, education and new infrastructures, such as ocean observatories or specialised research vessels; promoting inter-disciplinary research on cross-cutting issues such as the impact of human activities on coastal and marine ecosystems and or the protection and exploitation of marine biodiversity. The EC has also produced a Q&A document to complement the publication of the strategy. It provides information on issues such as how important the maritime economy is to the EU, why the EC has prepared a strategy and what the next steps are in implementing it.

Further information

EC press releases IP/08/1283 and MEMO/08/553 of 3 September 2008 are available at:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/>

The EC pages on maritime policy are available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs>

European co-operation on healthcare

The EC has adopted a proposal for a directive aimed at improving healthcare co-operation across Europe. The directive aims to tackle several complex issues which include the reimbursement for care obtained in other Member States; the co-ordination of social security systems; mutual recognition of professional qualifications; prevention of discrimination; and the need for a community framework for the protection of personal data. The proposal now needs to pass through the co-decision process involving the European Council and the European Parliament, and one possible delay to the process could be the European Parliament elections in June 2009. When the co-decision process is completed Member States will have a year to implement the directive.

Besides from the obvious benefits to patients that it is hoped would accrue from such a directive it is also hoped that there will be broader benefits. These include the additional methods that Member States can utilise to evaluate new health technologies and make the choices of these technologies more efficient and sustainable. The improvement in the monitoring of data and pooling of statistics that is proposed should allow for greater insights into the provision of cross-border healthcare in Europe.

Further information

Further information on the directive is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/co_operation/healthcare/cross-border_healthcare_en.htm

Successful ERC advanced grants applicants announced

The European Research Council (ERC) house announced the first successful candidates who submitted proposals for the Social Sciences and Humanities (SH) domain which had a deadline of 18 March 2008. The results for the Physical Sciences and Engineering (PE) domain, which had a deadline of 28 February 2008, have previously been published, and the list of successful applicants for the last two domains of Life Sciences and Interdisciplinary research are due to be released during the first half of October 2008. Following this the complete list of all successful ERC Advanced Grants candidates will be made public.

For the SH domain 404 applications were submitted. The peer review process took place from May to July 2008 and involved six evaluation panels. So far 44 Advanced Grant candidates for the SH domain have been made public and these have been endorsed by the Scientific Council, the body which defines the scientific and funding strategy of the ERC.

Further information

Further news relating to the ERC is available at:

<http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=26>

The list of successful Advanced Grant candidates in the SH domain is available at:

http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/AdG_ListSH27Aug08.pdf

Public strongly supports EU targets on climate change

The EC and EP recently commissioned a special 'Eurobarometer survey' about public attitudes to climate change. The survey of 30,170 people found that Europeans are very concerned about climate change, with three quarters of citizens taking the problems of climate change seriously and are clearly willing to take action against it. Sixty two per cent of people rated climate change as one

of the two most serious problems facing the world today, with only poverty being placed higher. The majority also feel that fighting climate change can have a positive impact on the economy.

In fact, the majority of Europeans feel that the EU's targets for the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases, and to increase the share of renewable energy by 2020, are accurate or even too modest. Unfortunately though, a significant proportion of people (around forty per cent) feel poorly informed about climate change and the ways they as citizens can help to fight it. Stavros Dimas, European Commissioner for Environment, added: 'the message is that a majority of Europeans supports the EU's targets or wants us to do even more. It is essential that the EP and Council approve the EC's climate and renewable energy proposals from January so Europe will be able to deliver fully on these targets and meet citizens' expectations.'

Further Information

EC Press Release IP/08/1314 of 11 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid>

The full report is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm

High level expert group on European low dose risk research

A new High Level Expert Group (HLEG) on European low dose risk research has been established. The HLEG is an initiative of representatives of six national bodies (with a policy interest or substantial research activities in low dose risk research) and the EURATOM research programme. The objectives of the HLEG are: to formulate and agree the policy goals to be addressed by low dose risk research; to develop a strategic research agenda and road map for low dose risk research in Europe; and to specify the essential elements of and next steps for establishing a sustainable operational framework for low dose risk research in Europe.

The HLEG has produced a draft report and has launched a public consultation on the draft. All stakeholders working in or interested in this area are invited to take part in the consultation, collated responses from interested institutions or other bodies are particularly encouraged. The consultation process will close on 30 November 2008. All responses must be sent via e-mail to consultation-hleg@bfs.de. The group intends to publish its final report plus its response statements in early 2009.

Further information

Further information is available at: <http://www.hleg.de>

Support research by cutting down on bureaucracy

Earlier this month the EC published a new 'Aho report', the most comprehensive evaluation of European Information Communication Technologies (ICT) research to date. The report emphasised the need to cut red tape to ensure that SMEs in particular are attracted to applying for European research. The report also highlighted that more should be done to ensure that research results are commercialised, and that a better link could be provided between research and venture capital.

Responding to the report, the EC called on EP and Council to support the EC in developing a more risk-tolerant approach to supporting research in the EU by cutting red tape and allowing greater flexibility to ensure that high-tech research can be more effective. The EC is now launching a public consultation that will lead to concrete proposals in early 2009. The European Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Ms Viviane Reding, highlighted the need to take a single market approach to ICT research, following the example of the European GSM standard, which is now used by three billion users worldwide.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1288 of 4 September 2008 available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid>

The Aho report can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/information_society/evaluation/rtd/fp6_ist_expost/index_en.htm

SMEs are DNA of EU economy according to Commissioner

EU Commissioner for Research, Janez Potočnik, gave a speech recently on the importance of SMEs to the EU economy and what the EC is doing to better support them. Potočnik was speaking at an event in Paris entitled 'Innovation and Research: SMEs are the DNA of European economy. How to support them more and better?', which was organised by the French Presidency of the EU. Potočnik stressed that SMEs are the DNA of the EU economy and the basis for future growth and prosperity. Legally, SMEs are defined as an enterprise that has less than 250 employees, a turnover less than €50 million, and a balance sheet of less than €43 million.

Potočnik then went on to detail the efforts and initiatives that the EC have so far introduced in order to better support SMEs. The Small Business Act, for example, is a framework based on the principle of 'think small first', which promises to place SMEs in the mainstream of European policy making. The EC also provides direct funding to research-intensive SMEs via several EU funds. SMEs can take part throughout the whole of FP7 and indeed there are also several areas within it where SME participation is either encouraged or a necessity. The new Joint Technology Initiatives, according to Potočnik, also offer substantial opportunities for SMEs, as do the Eurostars and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programmes.

Further information

EC Press Release SPEECH/08/424 of 15 September 2008 is available at:

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

The International Energy Agency reports on EU's energy policy

The International Energy Agency (IEA) review of the EU's energy policy has been published. The IEA is the world's most important intergovernmental body dealing with the energy market, policy analysis and energy crisis management. The review strongly endorses the broad outlines of the EC's energy proposals tabled during the last year. The review highlights the coherent EU energy and climate change approach and the EC's market liberalisation package for electricity and gas. Further, the review makes important recommendations concerning the need to increase research funding and establish a more coherent external energy policy with a stronger role for the EU institutions.

The EC will consider the findings of the IEA review in its future work to further improve its energy policy. At the same time, those interested in European energy issues should be able to use the review as a reference document. EC President José Manuel Barroso said, 'I am delighted that the IEA has endorsed so positively the Commission's climate change and energy proposals set out in 2007'. Energy Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs added that, 'the review of EU energy policy is a highly visible and politically important exercise that is very useful for the EC. It shows clearly that the EU is now recognised as a single entity in energy matters'.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1293 of 4 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

EC proposes uniform requirements for hydrogen cars in EU

The EP has expressed its support for the EC's proposal to simplify the approval of hydrogen powered vehicles. This will enhance the development and marketing of clean and safe hydrogen vehicles. The EP will vote on the issue soon. The current EU vehicle type-approval system does not include uniform requirements for hydrogen vehicles. This means that hydrogen vehicle manufacturers encounter problems when trying to place these vehicles on the EU market. Although member states can authorise national or single type-approval of a vehicle, other member states may not recognise this authorisation. At the moment there are no uniform requirements for issuing an approval certificate. This explains the fragmented internal market of hydrogen powered vehicles, as well as complicated and costly approval procedures, which discourages the introduction of this environmentally friendly technology.

For this reason the EC has proposed the regulation, which should ensure single approval for the entire EU. At the same time, the regulation will also guarantee that all hydrogen vehicles put on the market in the EU are at least as safe as conventional vehicles. In addition to the fact that hydrogen is a clean energy carrier, it is expected that the simplified procedures could result in a saving of up to €124 million in approval costs to vehicle manufacturers in the period 2017-2025.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1285 of 3 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

EC supports carbon dioxide capture and storage network

Carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS) technologies show great potential in helping reducing carbon dioxide emissions, especially from power plants using fossil fuels such as coal or gas. CCS could therefore contribute to reducing climate change, and the International Energy Agency estimates that the use of CCS could account for twenty per cent of the achievable global greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2050. The successful operation of demonstration projects is crucial to show that these technologies could be adopted on a large scale commercially, so the EC and European Council are keen to stimulate the construction and operation of a set of demonstration CCS plants by 2015.

The EC is launching a call for tenders, closing on 6 October 2008, for assistance in establishing and running a CCS project network in Europe. The network itself will link projects demonstrating the use of CCS technology in power plants. Initially, the network will support the exchange of information and experiences from large-scale industrial demonstration of the use of CCS technologies and will seek to optimise costs. In the future the network could also support the further development of CCS technologies, building towards the establishment of a European Industrial Initiative on CCS as proposed in the EC's Communication on the Strategic Energy Technology Plan.

Further Information

EC Press Release IP/08/1315 of 11 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid>

Further Information on the Strategic Energy Technology Plan is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/energy/res/setplan/communication_2007_en.htm

From GMES to Kopernikus

The GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) Forum entitled 'Together, take better care of the Planet' was held at the Grand Palais in Lille, on 16 - 17 September 2008. GMES offers Europe a major environmental information service, necessary for the management of the marine environment, the land resource, air quality, humanitarian risks and emergencies, global security

and the assessment of climate change impacts. It was decided at the conference that GMES would be re-branded and it is now to be called Kopernikus.

The GMES Forum 2008 was jointly organised by French Presidency and the EC to mark the launch of the first GMES services in pre-operational mode. These services include fields such as territorial management; the marine environment; air quality; and emergency situations, whether created by natural disasters or human activity. The Forum aimed to demonstrate the capabilities of the initial services; show users the benefits of these services; and encourage companies to use these services to improve their competitiveness. The GMES Forum 2008 presented GMES and its earliest services both to end-users and to the intermediary companies providing services based on this type of information and wishing to use the results of this public investment to develop new markets.

Further information

Further information about the GMES Forum 2008 is available at:

http://www.esa.int/esaEO/SEM6N6P4KKF_index_0.html

The website for GMES, or Kopernikus, as it is now known is available at: <http://www.gmes.info/>

Pesticide rules to strengthen food safety

A new regulation revising and simplifying the rules on pesticide residues entered into force at the start of September 2008. The new rules set harmonised Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) for pesticides and aim to ensure food safety for all consumers and allow traders and importers to do business smoothly as confusion over dealing with 27 lists of national MRLs is eliminated.

With the previous regime, different MRLs could apply to the same pesticide for the same crop in different Member States, a situation which gave rise to questions from consumers, farmers and traders. Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 is the result of a considerable joint effort by the EC, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the Member States. A new database can now be consulted to search for the MRL applicable to each crop and pesticide. This database is freely and easily accessible by every citizen to guarantee transparent and up-to-date information on the EU pesticide residues legislation.

Further information

To access the database, please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/sanco_pesticides/public/index.cfm

For more information, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/protection/pesticides/index_en.htm

Animal health plans explained

The 'Action Plan on the EU's Animal Health Strategy' has recently been explained in more detail in the light of some changes in the EC's plans to implement this strategy. Key elements such as the vision, purpose or goals of the strategy have not changed. However, there are many new elements in the Action Plan. The plan represents a renewed commitment from the EC to follow-up the steps and deliver the expected outcomes.

'Science, Innovation and Research' is the fourth pillar in the Action Plan. In 2008-2013 there will be measures taken to: mobilise and co-ordinate scientific resources with EFSA support; evaluate the Community reference laboratories; survey/control antimicrobial resistance; and have more incentives to develop new medicines and diagnostic tools.

Further information

EC Press Release MEMO/08/557 of 10 September 2008, which is an FAQ on the Action Plan, is available here: <http://europa.eu/rapid/search/>

The strategy itself can be accessed at the following web site:
http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/index_en.htm

Commissioner Potočnik makes a big splash

Janez Potočnik, the European Commissioner for Science and Research, recently spoke at a European Research Day in Zaragoza where past, present and future EU water research activities were presented. This research has covered the role of water in the environment and in society. It has promoted a sound water knowledge base, good technological and institutional water management, and an awareness of both the political dimensions and the necessity to actively protect the viability of our aquatic ecosystem. The aim of the conference was now to identify ambitious objectives in order to develop new concepts, technologies and tools.

Potočnik felt that the conference was “a great opportunity for us to reflect about what we've achieved, but more importantly to develop new ideas, technologies and tools in our quest for sustainable water solutions”. He talked about how water could be developed and managed to help end poverty and hunger, promote environmentally sustainable practices, and find a balance between food and environmental security. He also talked about: the UN Millennium Development Goals; the EU Water Framework Directive in 2000, which was a major tool for delivering and managing truly integrated and international environmental water research; and research funding through FP7; and the role of the Water Supply and Sanitation Technology Platform.

Further Information

EC Press Release SPEECH/08/403 of 8 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid>

Further Information, including copies of presentations from the event, is at:
http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/rtd/eesdwtakeact/library?!=european_research

Public consultation on the future of ICT

The EC recently launched a public consultation to feed in to a new strategy for ICT research and innovation, which will be launched next year. The public consultation will remain open until 7 November this year. At the launch of the consultation the European Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Ms Viviane Reding, highlighted the important role that ICT plays in meeting challenges in areas such as energy, health and ageing.

The consultation forms part of the EC response to the recent Aho report, which argued that Europe must do more to cut down on bureaucracy and encourage SMEs, in particular, to participate in European research. The consultation is structured around three key questions: what are the main challenges for ICT research and innovation; how, and in what fields, should Europe aim to lead; and what is role of public policy in putting Europe at the forefront of ICT innovation?

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1287 of 4 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid>

The consultation document can be accessed at:
<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=ICTRDI>

Consultation on copyright

The EC has published a Green Paper consultation which is intended to stimulate debate on the long-term future of copyright policy in the European knowledge economy. The period for consultation lasts until 30 November 2008. The document focuses on how the results of research, science and education are disseminated to the public and whether knowledge is circulating freely in the internal market. Topics for debate, therefore, include scientific publishing, the digital preservation of Europe's cultural heritage, orphan works, consumer access to protected works and the special needs for the disabled to participate in the information society.

The Green Paper not only focuses on the dissemination of knowledge but also on the current legal framework in the area of copyright and the possibilities that it can offer to a variety of user groups. The EC is seeking the input of all interested stakeholders, particularly publishers, libraries, educational establishments, museums, archives, researchers and the public at large.

Further information

Further information is available from the EC internal market website at:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/copyright-info/copyright-info_en.htm#greenpaper

Research News

Smart and safe cars

A project to make everyday vehicles safer has been launched with European funding. The project will pave the way for the next generation of intelligent software that will be installed in everyday vehicles, increasing vehicle safety and saving lives. EuroFOT has received €13.9 million in funding under FP7 and has brought together the brightest minds in the automotive industry and put them on the road to developing innovative safety systems.

Twenty eight partners have joined together under the euroFOT project, including some of the largest European automobile producers, as well as their suppliers of technology and research institutes. The central objective is to co-ordinate and validate the most up-to-date Intelligent Vehicle Systems (IVS) utilising the latest testing methodology. Project co-ordinators claim that the systems developed as part of the project have 'the potential to improve the quality of European road traffic'.

Further information

More details on the project are detailed in the article here:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?id=research/headlines/news/article_08_09_12_en.html&item=Infocentre&artid=8133

Galaxy secrets revealed

A recent EC news update reveals that the discovery, by a European-led team of international astronomers, of a star that recently went into supernova, may have exploded more violently than previously thought and collapsed into a black hole. Their observations were made thanks to the Very Large Telescope of the European Organisation for Astronomical Research in the Southern Hemisphere and represent an important milestone in astronomy, providing more information on one of the galaxy's most violent events.

'What made this event interesting', said Paolo Mazzali from the Italian National Institute for Astrophysics (INAF), 'is that the X-ray signal was very weak and soft, very different from a gamma-ray burst and more in line with what is expected from a normal supernova'. This was the first time that astronomers anywhere had seen the star in question, SN 2008D, in the act of exploding. The discovery sheds further light on how stars end their lives, produce dense objects, and inject new chemical elements back into the gas, from which new beginnings will be formed, thus continuing the cycle.

Further information

Further details are available on the EUROPA Research Information centre website at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?id=/research/headlines/news/article_08_08_25_en.html&item=Infocentre&artid=7993

Discovery of lateral roots

A paper recently published in Nature Cell Biology describes discoveries made by an international and interdisciplinary team of researchers, on how roots grow and develop so that they are able to move sideways out of the central root and into the soil. The findings of the team, led by the Centre for Plant Integrative Biology at the University of Nottingham, show that these 'lateral roots', crucial in providing both stability and essential nutrients to the plant, are able to re-programme the cells that overlay them, causing them to separate and enabling the new root to emerge.

Professor Malcolm Bennett, Biology Director for the Centre for Plant Integrative Biology and Head of Division of Plant and Crop Sciences comments that, 'In addition to providing new biological insight into lateral root emergence, we have identified a large number of the genes that control this process'. This may enable scientists to breed crops with improved root architecture in the future, increasing their chances of survival in difficult soils.

Further information

Further details are available on the EUROPA Research Information centre website at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/infocentre/article_en.cfm?id=/research/headlines/news/article_08_08_27_en.html&item=Infocentre&artid=8013

Robots acting like humans

Earlier this year, the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), organised a conference for young researchers in the field of cognitive sciences and robotics. At the conference, Professor Yasuo Kuniyoshi, from the University of Tokyo, argued that it would be ideal to develop robots that can adapt and learn from their mistakes. Participants at the conference were also presented with new walking techniques for biped robots.

Another focus of the event was the importance of communication between humans and robots, and developing natural means of transmitting human knowledge to robots. If experts are able to create robots that can interpret a person's intention and predict their actions, there could be a step towards getting robots to imitate human gestures. Overall, the techniques that were presented at the conference are expected to be taken up by cognitive robotics in years to come.

Further information

Further information is available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/>

Education, Training and Culture

First meeting of the EIT Board

The Board of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT) had its first meeting earlier this month. The meeting took place in Budapest, as the city selected to host the EIT earlier this year. The meeting included a formal ceremonial opening in the presence of the Hungarian Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány, the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, and the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel. During the opening ceremony, speakers highlighted the important role of the EIT in contributing to the Barcelona target of spending 3 per cent of GDP on R&D, and in nurturing talent and knowledge.

The EIT is a new European initiative focusing on all three aspects of the 'knowledge triangle' (education, innovation and research), ensuring that Europe can remain competitive with other regions in the world. Earlier this year, an independent committee selected the 18 members of the EIT Governing Board, which will oversee the EIT's strategy and operational base. By early 2010, the EIT is expected to have selected two to three Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), which will make up the EIT. Each KIC will include members from the business and education sectors across Europe, and will focus on a specified research area.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1318 of 15 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid>

Further information on the EIT can be found at <http://eit.europa.eu>

Košice to be the European Capital of Culture in 2013

The Slovakian city of Košice has beaten rivals Prešov, Martin and Nitra to be named the European Capital of Culture for Slovakia in 2013 by the assessment jury which met in Bratislava. This choice is due to be formally endorsed by the European Council of Ministers in May 2009. The European Commissioner for Education, Training, and Culture, Ján Figel, stated: 'I congratulate Košice on its nomination and am delighted by the enthusiasm generated by the prospect of becoming the Capital of Culture for 2013 and the seriousness of the preparations. The Capitals of Culture have an important role to play in promoting our diversity and cultural wealth. All the preselected cities were very motivated by the prospect of hosting the event — not only the cultural aspect but also the associated socio-economic impact — and the competition was of a very high standard. I am convinced that those cities which were not chosen will also benefit from the experience.'

In 2013 France and Slovakia are the two Member States eligible to showcase a city as the European Capital of Culture. The jury met in Paris during September to decide what the French city is to be. The bids are examined by an international jury of 13 members, six of these are appointed by the Member State concerned, whilst the other seven are appointed by the European Institutions.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1304 of 12 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid>

Europa School Diary 2008/09 launched

The Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Meglena Kuneva, has launched the fifth edition of the Europa School Diary, an educational tool for young consumers in the EU. A wide range of topics are covered in the diary which are of particular concern to young people such as travel, nutrition, drugs, financial concerns, the environment and sustainable consumption. Another important

function of the diary is to try to plug the identified gap in young peoples' knowledge in relation to their rights as consumers. The Europa School Diary is accompanied by a teachers' guide containing background information on different consumer topics, exercises to test students' understanding of the issues, as well as questions for discussion and suggested research topics.

Both the diary and teacher's guide are available in all EU languages and are distributed to schools for free on a first come, first served basis, and almost three million orders for the diary have already been placed for this latest version, by almost 18,000 schools across the EU. Those who wish to order the diary and teacher's guide can do so online by the middle of February each year stating the number of copies required.

Further information

More information on the Europa School Diary is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/empowerment/cons_education_en.htm#diary

Joint TV spot promotes tolerance through languages

The EC, UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) and FARE (Football against Racism in Europe) have launched a joint TV spot that promotes tolerance through languages. The spot focuses on three groups of football fans who, despite their different cultural backgrounds, origins and languages, share similar excitement of a football match. From 16 September onwards, the spot is aired during the half-time break throughout the entire season's televised UEFA Champions League football games. Not only has the spot been developed in line with the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, the launch of the spot coincides with the EC's plan to present its new strategic Communication on multilingualism, making the case for language learning as well as preserving and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity.

The EC, UEFA and FARE use the spot as part of their 'Unite against racism' campaign, launched on 7 June in Switzerland, in the context of the UEFA EURO 2008. As the spot is broadcast at the interval of each of the 125 matches, it is expected to reach more than 140 million viewers during each match week of the UEFA Champions League, from September 2008 until May 2009.

Further information

EC Press Release IP/08/1313 of 11 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

External Collaboration

New international research strategy for EC

The EC has just published its new international research strategy. Entitled the 'European Strategic Framework for International Science and Technology', the new strategy outlines the core principles that should underpin EU co-operation with the rest of the world and proposes specific areas for action. The field of ICT, for which the EU is a net exporter, plays a prominent role in the strategy.

In particular, the strategy proposes two new areas for action: one is to strengthen the international dimension of the European Research Area (ERA), by integrating EU neighbours into the ERA and fostering strategic co-operation with key third countries throughout the world; the second area for action is to improve the framework conditions for international co-operation in science and technology and the promotion of European technologies worldwide. This would include the joint

development of global large-scale infrastructures, support to the mobility of researchers and the management of intellectual property.

Further information

EC press release IP/08/1395 of 24 September 2008 is available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/>

The strategy is available directly at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/press/2008/pdf/com_2008_588_en.pdf

New secretariat to implement ACP science and technology programme

The Programme for Science and Technology Innovations and Capacity Building (PSTICB) for the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) States now has a secretariat which has begun implementing the programme through an appointed Programme Management Unit. The programme was developed against the background of the Cape Town ACP ministerial forum on research in 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the EC Strategy for Sustainable Development. The programme assists co-ordination and networking in applied research, provides instruments to assist with collaborative research and the management of research activities. Through these activities it is hoped that the programme will facilitate the creation or strengthening of frameworks for the regional and sub-regional co-operation, and of inter-institutional co-operation in the ACP region in the field of science and technology.

There is a website which presents the outline of the new programme and it is possible to register to receive updates on calls for proposals. The website includes information on a call for proposals which is expected in autumn 2008, with a closing date in early 2009.

Further information

Further information is available at: <http://www.acp-st.eu>

Events and Awards

HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis – challenges for the future conference

The EC's DG Research is organising an international conference on poverty-related diseases (PRDs) in Brussels, Belgium, on 13 - 14 November. The conference, entitled 'Challenges for the future - research on HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis', aims at increasing the impact of EU-funded research on controlling PRDs and regaining political momentum for continuing and intensifying research addressing the 'big three' global killer diseases. The conference will also include reflection on the results obtained in FP6 and consider possible future lines of research on HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in FP7 and beyond.

Leading scientists, research managers, decision-makers, funding agencies and representatives of relevant international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will attend, with significant participation from disease-endemic countries in order to discuss strategies for the future of poverty-related infectious diseases research.

Further information

Further information about the conference and the detailed programme are available at:

<http://poverty-related-diseases.teamwork.fr/>

Marco Polo conference 2008

The EC's DG TREN is hosting the 2008 Marco Polo conference in Valencia, Spain, on 2-3 December 2008. The two-day conference will give participants details of what the Marco Polo programme is and how to participate. Marco Polo is the EU scheme that aims at reducing road congestion and improving the environmental performance of the freight transport system. It aims to enhance the intermodality of transport, thereby contributing to an efficient and sustainable system. It therefore funds projects relating to rail, road, waterway and inter-modal transport networks.

The 2008 conference will provide delegates with the latest news and background on the Marco Polo programme, present ongoing Marco Polo projects and their champions, and also give information to applicants on how to apply for funding under future calls for project proposals. Delegates will have the opportunity to meet with officials from the Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation, which is the implementation body for Marco Polo, in order to discuss project ideas. The event will end with an excursion to the port of Valencia.

Further information

The conference website is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/marcopolo/events/conf_en.htm

The Marco Polo programme website is available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/marcopolo>

EuroBio 2008 - the European presidency event in life sciences: make change happen

EuroBio 2008, the European Presidency event in life sciences, will take place in Paris on 7 - 9 October 2008. EuroBio 2008 will gather leading international actors from life sciences and industry to discuss biotechnologies in three main areas of implementation: health, agro-industry and environment. EuroBio 2008 is articulated around four pillars: (i) conferences with major plenary sessions and interactive debates (House of Commons and BioDialogues) with almost 120 world-renowned speakers; (ii) a business convention to facilitate meetings and networking between 500 companies; (iii) an exhibition bringing together leading international BioClusters, pioneering regions, consulting firms and privately-held and listed companies; and (iv) a career fair to make it easier for the sector's leading stakeholders to link up with talented jobseekers.

In the weeks that follow EuroBio 2008, representatives of all those present will be consulted through a Green Paper which will lead to the presentation of a White Paper to the European Institutions. A follow-up meeting will be held with the European Institutions in the spring of 2009 to monitor progress.

Further information

Further information about the EuroBio 2008 is available at: <http://www.eurobio2008.com/>

International conference of the forest-based sector

The international conference of the European forest-based sector entitled 'bio-responses to address new climate and energy challenges?' will be held from 6 - 8 November 2008, in the city of Nancy, France. During this conference, organised by the French Presidency of the EU, the roles of the forest-based sector and perspectives for the future will be discussed under three main headings: forests as carbon sinks; wood-based products: carbon pools and energy conservation; and forest-based sector: source of bioenergy.

Around 350 participants are expected to attend the conference, including experts from research centres and universities, professionals from the European forest-based sector, delegates from European Member States and the EC, and representatives of national or international bodies.

Further information

Further information about the conference is available at: http://www.gip-ecofor.org/publi/page.php?id=1&rang=0&domain=34&lang=en_GB

Human brain tissue international conference

The EU-funded 'Network of Excellence' project BrainNet is organising an international conference on human brain tissue research from 10 - 12 December 2008 in Munich, Germany. Registration for the conference is currently open, however, the deadline for submitting an abstract has now passed. The conference will focus on the practice of modern brain banking and molecular research using human brain tissue. The topics are to include: multiple sclerosis and other demyelinating diseases, frontotemporal dementia, Alzheimer's, Parkinsons, gene expression profiling, proteomics, neurochemistry, brain bank management, data handling and ethical issues.

The BrainNet Europe consortium is composed of 19 brain banks in Europe, the purpose of which is to promote brain banking as a resource for European neuroscience through the provision of high quality brain tissue samples. Other issues addressed by the consortium include developing techniques and standards, and to provide training in brain banking and related technologies.

Further information

Further information on the BrainNet conference, including online registration, is available at: <http://www.brainnet-europe.org/conference>

New Publications and Online Resources

EC guide to combining research funding

The EC has recently published the final version of a new guide on how to support research and innovation activities by combining funds through FP7, the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) and the Structural Funds. Earlier in the year the EC opened a draft version of this guide to consultation. The feedback given to the EC from that consultation has been taken on board in the final version. The guide acts as a tool for researchers to select the right programme for their activities or even combine funds from different sources at various points in the lifecycle of their project.

The guide is made up of three parts: the main document, which gives background details of FP7, CIP and Structural Funds; a checklist and a scorecard. The checklist allows users to identify the most suitable source of funding by answering six key questions, such as 'what type of organisation am I'? The scorecard complements the checklist and allows users to answer the checklist questions by giving them a 'plus', 'minus' or intermediate response.

Further information

The final version of the guide is available from the following website: http://cordis.europa.eu/eu-funding-guide/home_en.html

New website for socio-economic sciences and humanities research

A new website for the socio-economic sciences and the humanities (SSH) theme in FP7 has been launched. The website will give up-to-date information on activities that will replace the SSH newsletter. Information is provided on 'research in SSH', that outlines what research is funded in the SSH priority; 'Find funding', with information on open calls and where to get further information; 'Policy Briefs and Research Achievements', which gives an overview of published policy reviews and databases. There are also 'E-Library', 'Overview of publications resulting from SSH projects', 'News and Events', 'Information on past and present events', and 'What's new' sections.

The SSH programme implements EU research activities that address the major challenges facing the social, economic, political and cultural make-up of Europe. As such, the SSH programme concerns all aspects of European societies. The programme facilitates excellence in research by harnessing and sharing knowledge and by strengthening collaboration between various disciplines.

Further information

This is the address of the new website: http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/index_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.ec.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

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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