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Seen from Brussels

▪ Technology platforms – a new star on the European research and innovation sky

There are topics which seem to pop up just like that, almost unnoticed at the beginning. Suddenly, everyone speaks about them, and no one really knows where they came from. One such topic are the "technology platforms" in the area of European research policy.

Even in 2003 only, technology platforms are mentioned on various occasions and in several relevant policy documents, *e.g.* in the Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council on 20 and 21 March 2003, in the follow-up communication to the 3% goal, "Investing in research: an action plan for Europe" on 30 April 2003, or in the "European initiative for growth" on 1 October 2003 (see article below). In all of them, the description of technology platform is very similar: European technology platforms should help build and implement coherent approaches for the development of key technology sectors by combining efficiently research with deployment, implementation and regulatory measures. They should bring together the main stakeholders concerned, i.e. technological know-how, research, industry, regulators, financial institutions and civil society in order to set a common strategic agenda addressing research as well as, where appropriate, regulatory and standardisation issues.

This concept of technology platforms may have appeared more strongly in 2003, but it is not completely new, either. The first area in which the concept was used was aeronautics. Following the recommendations of a "Group of Personalities" chaired by Commissioner Busquin in January 2001, a new advisory body was established, involving all stakeholders such as manufacturing industry, airlines, airports, air traffic controllers, regulators, research institutes and academia. This new Advisory Council for Aeronautics Research in Europe, ACARE, published a Strategic Research Agenda, SRA, in November 2002 (see Synopsis 2002/5), as a plan for materialising the "2020 Vision" launched in 2001 and the goals it had identified. These should be reached through "collaboration, strengthened and guided by a single shared vision" and through "common mechanisms" which would be created for research and technological development in this area. Concrete measures were put forward how these targets should be reached, such as increase safety, reduce noise, fuel consumption and CO_2 emissions, improve infrastructure research, seamless certification and qualification processes for new technologies, etc.

The success of this first "prototype" of a technology platform encouraged the Commission to launch similar structures also in other technological areas. The driving forces in this process were two-fold, namely to structure the research effect, and to achieve a coherent European industrial policy. Especially the latter was an important motif for involving all stakeholders. It is not enough to ensure that the research is structured and the technology is developed, but there must also be the appropriate and stimulating framework conditions. It does not make sense to develop a promising technology if then, at a later stage, the regulatory framework hinders its implementation. Rather, a constructive cooperation between all actors involved at a stage as early as possible can enhance and even create synergies.

There are currently no fixed structures for technology platforms, and the Commission actually does not want to change that in the next few weeks. Indeed, the Commission appreciates the flexibility given by such an open approach and fears that with a written and published policy paper, this flexibility would be lost and a lengthy discussion about formal criteria would begin which would not contribute to a dynamic evolution of this concept. The Commission will, "learning by doing", adapt the concept with increasing experience.

Even in such a still fluid phase, some common characteristics of present and planned technology platforms can be distinguished:

- industrial relevance: research and its results should be a key element in the success of the technology concerned

- European added value: the technology should be a key technology in the European economic area, and industry should benefit from coordinated efforts at European level
- strategic agenda: the actors involved should be able to agree on a common vision for their field and on the steps which are necessary to get there
- commitment at highest level: in all sectors, the highest representatives should be involved and ready to commit their company or country to the chosen agenda. *I.e.* not the research director of a company should be involved, but the CEO; not the head of a section in an administration, but the minister.

The discussion on the thematic agenda, *i.e.* on a strategy on how to chose the concrete areas in which a technology platform could or should be launched, is not very advanced yet. According to Commission representatives, there are two options for the first steps. One the one hand, it could be initiated from representatives of an area or industry themselves, who contact the Commission on their own initiative and discuss the further proceeding. The Commission would then ask the group or industry to bring together the relevant actors and critical mass for a technology platform to work. On the other hand, the Commission can launch platforms in areas which it feels to be of critical importance for European industrial competitiveness.

For the "European Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technology Platform", the first meetings have taken place, and a call to express interest in participation is open until 7 November 2003. The structure and possible role of the different bodies are lined out in a draft concept paper available on the internet. Further areas in which the establishment of technology platforms are envisaged are nanoelectronics, rail systems, photovoltaics, plant genomics, and automotive industry, and further areas are expected to be determined soon. Following the roadmap set out in the "European Initiative for Growth", the process of launching this first wave of European technology platforms should be completed by June 2004.

The Commission describes technology platforms as "concept for organising a process" but they are also put forward as an innovative way of how EU funding could leverage national funding. As such, they would fit nicely into future framework programmes as *e.g.* in FP7, for which the discussion and reflections are starting in Brussels these days. An alternative might be that the work of these platforms might be structured around specially formed "Joint undertakings".

There are still many uncertainties about the exact structure and way of functioning of technology platforms but there is growing evidence that they will play an important role in the future landscape of European research, innovation and industry policy.

More information on this topic:

Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council, 20 and 21 March 2003
http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.getfile=gf&doc=DOC/03/2|0|AGED&lg=EN&type=PDF

Investing in research: an action plan for Europe (COM(2003) 226 final/2)
http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0226en02.pdf

European Initiative for growth: Investing in networks and knowledge for growth and employment – Interim Report to the European Council (COM 2003/579 final)
http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/pdf/COM2003_579_en.pdf

The ACARE website: http://www.acare4europe.org/

High Level Group on Hydrogen and Fuel Cells
http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/energy/nn/nn_rt_hlg1_en.html

▪ **For Prodi, investment in infrastructures and research are the key to EU growth**

In all European capitals, and thus also in Brussels, reforms to tackle Europe's economic underperformance have been high on the political agenda this autumn. Commission President

Romano Prodi believes that initiatives from the European Union, complementing those from the Member States, should be a "powerful signal of strong economic governance and of confidence in the potential of the European economy" and that structural reforms in line with the Lisbon objectives should be tacked without further delay.
Thus, on 1 October 2003, the Commission presented "A European Initiative for Growth" which proposes a roadmap of actions aiming at increasing overall investment and private involvement in networks and knowledge, the two pillars of this initiative.
Increased investment in Trans-European Networks (TENs) in the fields of the transport (TEN-T)), energy and telecommunication (broadband and *e*TEN) markets should translate into greater competitiveness as well as more and better jobs. Relaying and extending to the accession countries a plan launched in its time by Commission President Delors, the infrastructure part of the initiative foresees 29 new projects in the field of transport as well as investments in other fields to be financed by different EU funds (cohesion and structural funds) as well as EU programmes (FP6, *e*TENs, TENs-Transport). The total funding at the disposal of these projects should be of approx. 280 billlion Euros.
Increased investment in knowledge, that is in research, development and innovation, along the lines of the 3% Action Plan presented in April 2003 (COM(2003)226), is the second pillar of this initiative. Key-words for actions to be taken urgently include: state aid measures for SMEs, security-related research, Community patent, European technology platforms (see article above) and risk capital.
Thus, nothing very new in terms of actions, apart from the increased role of the European Investment Bank (EIB) which will develop its activities in support of research, development and innovation. But this Initiative for Growth is without doubt a confirmation of the very high political profile which research and development have gained with regard to the competitiveness of European industry and to sustained growth and employment in Europe, definitely one the hottest issues of this autumn.
Heads of State and Government, who were meeting in Brussels on 16-17 October 2003 endorsed the principles of the proposed Growth Initiative and invited the relevant actors to be more active in order to reach the targets set out by the Initiative for Growth. Commission services, Ministers, the European Parliament and the EIB will thus have to deliver according to the planned roadmap.

European Initiative for growth: Investing in networks and knowledge for growth and employment – Interim Report to the European Council (COM 2003/579 final)
http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/pdf/COM2003_579_en.pdf

Presidency conclusions, European Council meeting of 16-17 October 2003
http://ue.eu.int/pressData/en/ec/77679.pdf

Before the Commission presented its political Initiative for Growth, Commission President had established a High-Level Study Group, chaired by Prof. Sapir, to analyse the consequences of the two strategic goals the EU has set itself for this decade: 1) to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy with economic growth and social cohesion (Lisbon goals) and 2) to make a success of the enlargement.
After the analysis of the performance of the EU, the study group put forward a six-point political agenda in order to achieve sustainable growth in the EU. This study goes much beyond the roadmap of measures presented above and looks into depth into the six issues identified, making precise recommendations for policy making at EU level. Again, innovation as a driver of economic growth as well as the necessary boost of investment in education and research are clearly spelt out.

An Agenda for a Growing Europe - Making the EU Economic System Deliver (Sapir Report)
http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/pdf/sapir_report_en.pdf

News in Brief
EU-Research Policy:

▪ **FP assessment: UK calls for more transparency**

Entitled "UK Science and Europe: Value for Money?", a recent report by the House of Commons' Science and Technology Committee makes an interesting analysis of the functioning of the Framework programme, both in Brussels and in the UK.

The report raises some interesting basic questions about the Framework programmes, the processes both in establishing and running them, the influence of Member States as well as the returns on the funding sent to Brussels, the changes needed at EU and UK level for FP7. In addition, it discusses the need to establish a European Research Council in order to complement the framework programmes at basic science level and with less bureaucracy.

The report also mentions the current preparation by the French Assemblée Nationale's Délégation des Affaires Européennes of an information report on European Research Policy.

The Report by the House of Commons can be found under:
http://www.parliament.the-stationeryoffice.co.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmsctech/386/386.pdf

▪ **ERC should be financed by the EU: Conclusions of an expert group report**

Following the discussions on the theme of the European Research Area (ERA) and of the creation of a European Research Council (ERC) that had taken place during the Danish Presidency in the second half of 2002, a European Research Council Expert Group (ERCEG) had been set up. This expert group, chaired by Professor Federico Mayor, published last week an interim report on their work up to this summer.

The report concludes that the ERC should be "a specific and autonomous entity

- set up to guide and manage a European Basic Research Fund, which receives its budget from the EU,
- accountable to the EU and to other possible funding partners for its funding principles and priorities,
- guided by the European scientific community,
- and with a mission for funding internationally excellent research covering all disciplines via a competitive process of international peer review."

The aim of this interim paper is to provide Ministries, national research organisations and other relevant actors with a possibility to provide input for the final version of the report. A final report giving more details on the tasks and priorities of a future ERC as well as outlining the future political steps towards the establishment of an ERC will be published and presented to the EU Competitiveness Council by the end of 2003.

More information about the ERCEG and the interim report can be found under:
http://www.ercexpertgroup.org/index.html

On the same topic, the Council of Ministers (Competitveness) asked the European Commission on 22 September to urgently prepare a Communication on the creation of a European Research Council and on the position of basic research in the EU. Ministers indicated that they would like to consider this paper at their next meeting on 27 November 2003.

▪ **European Science Foundation provides new COST secretariat**

After a memorandum to this end had been signed in 2002, the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the European Commission signed a contract for ESF to provide the administrative,

technical and scientific secretariat and management for COST. This contract will be financed under FP6 in the part "Strengthening the foundations of ERA" as a Specific Support Action (SSA) with 50-80 mio. Euro over the next 4 years. An initial provision of 22 mio. Euro will be provided by the Commission until end 2004. The new COST office will be situated on the Avenue Louise in Brussels
This contract means the end of a period of uncertainty for COST, which will also witness changes in its hierarchy: Mr. Tony Mayer was appointed new Acting Head of the COST office.
More information on COST can be found under: http://cost.cordis.lu/src/home.cfm

▪ **Space: Framework agreement on ESA-EU co-operation**
On 22 September, EU Competitiveness Ministers gave their political agreement to a Framework agreement between the EU and ESA, which marks an important milestone in the increased co-ordination and collaboration between the two institutions.
The goal of this Framework agreement is to set the legal context and the methods for cooperation between the EU and ESA, whilst both parties are to retain their own autonomy and institutional mechanisms (for example ESA's "juste retour" mechanism). This should enable the EU Commission to count on ESA expertise as well as enable for joint projects to be carried out. In terms of institutions, the agreement foresees the setting up of a secretariat in charge of co-operation as well joint EU-ESA Space Councils at Minister level.
The ESA Council is expected to give its approval in November, so that the agreement can be formally signed on the 27 November 2003, where a first joint ESA-EU Space Council will be taking place.
More information on the EU Space policy can be found under:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/space/index_en.html

▪ **Community statistics on Science and Technology: new standards**
On 22 July, the Council of Ministers confirmed its agreement with the European Parliament on this issue and adopted a new Decision concerning the production and development of Community statistics on science and technology (1608/2003/EC). The aim of this new decision is to develop a new generation of statistical data in order to monitor science and technology activities in the EU. The previous decision on this topic had expired in 1997.
This decision puts a specific emphasis on the need to improve the quality of statistics by introducing variables on new fields such as innovation, human resources in science and technology, patents, high-technology statistics and gender-disaggregated statistics. Existing standards and manuals, data quality as well as the dissemination of statistical information are to be improved and co-operation with the OECD and other international organisations strengthened. The decision was published in the Official Journal on 16 September 2003 and entered into force in early October.

▪ **Military research at the EU level? Preparatory action to be launched**
At the Competitveness Council on 13 May 2003, EU Ministers had decided to better coordinate research activities on the border between military and civilian applications. One month later, Heads of State, at the European Council of Thessaloniki, had approved the creation of an intergovernmental agency in the field of defence capabilities. Such an agency, which should also be involved in the promotion of research actions aimed at European leadership in strategic technologies should be established in 2004 under the authority of the Council of Ministers.
However the Commission is weary of such intergovernmental developments and offered, in a Communication published in March 2003, to put its experience of European Research programmes at the disposal of the Council of Ministers. In order to profile the Commission in this field, the Commission has set up a working group to help define the goals of a "preparatory action on research and security" which will be launched with a budget of 65 mio. Euros for 3

years. According to the Commission, this pilot action should prepare the ground for an "effective cooperation between national research programmes" whilst guaranteeing the European-added value the Commission fears to lose in an intergovernmental co-operation. Initial calls for proposals are expected in spring 2004.
The working group set up by the Commission held its first meeting on 6 and 7 October 2003. It is composed of the Commissioners Busquin and Liikanen as well as representatives from the European Parliament, industry as well as politicians. Two more plenary meetings are planned before the group reports back to the Commission early 2004.
In the short term, the Commission is also expected to adopt a communication entitled "Towards a programme to advance European security through Research and Technology". It should be adopted by the end of 2003.

6th Framework Programme (FP6)

▪ **FP6 funding: what happens with Acceding countries between 1.1.2004 and 1.5. 2004?**
After a slight legal embarrassment, the Commission has specified the funding rules for the 10 future EU Member States for the time between 1.1.2004, end of their status as Associated States, and 1.5.2004, beginning of their status as Member States. Indeed, following Article 32 of the Accession Treaty, no financial commitment to the benefit of the 10 new Member States can be concluded between 1.1.2004 and 1.5.2004. This did not fit very well with the timing of the first FP6 projects…
In order to clarify the situation, the Commission has published a memo concerning the administrative arrangements to be made for projects which were to be signed and start in that time: These vary according to the status of the participant from the Acceding country – partner or coordinator- and the type of projects –single participant actions or multi-partner projects. They will also certainly be applied on a case-by-case basis.
More information can be found under: http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/accession_info.htm

▪ **IST: Commission Communication on *e*Government**
On 26 September, the Commission adopted a Communication on the role of *e*Government in Europe's future. This paper reviews the obstacles faced by the introduction of *e*Govermnent as well as the current state of play in this field and identifies a number of initiatives for implementing this action already defined as a priority in the *e*Europe 2005 Action Plan.
Whilst the Commission emphasises that "technology cannot turn bad procedures into good ones" and recognises that "the introduction of *e*Government is not easy", it calls upon the Member States to speed up the implementation and development of online administration. Indeed the Commission believes that by putting the focus on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and organisational change as well as new skills -and not on ICT alone- *e*Government can improve public services, democratic processes and public policies.
The Commission puts the emphasis on the following actions: a) the reinforcement of exchange of good practice, b) the improvement of the coherence between and within EU and national research programmes in this field and c) the work at national, regional and local level on the *e*Europe 2005 targets. A detailed list of 18 actions to be launched is attached to the communication.
More on the *e*Government initiatives by the European Commission:
http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/2005/all_about/egovernment/index_en.htm

▪ **Space/Galileo: first call and outline of the specificities of this FP6 thematic area**
After the Galileo Joint Undertaking (JU), which will manage the Galileo part of the Aerospace thematic priority, was set up this summer, one of its first actions was to publish the Galileo call

in FP6. All those who were expecting this part of FP6 to be like the rest: new and traditional instruments, evaluation by peer review only, EPSS, policy relevance and precise minimum targets for the participation of SMEs be warned: the Galileo part of the Space part of Thematic Priority 4 (Aeronautics & Space) just works differently!
The call published on 31 July and open until mid-October (the date varies according to the method you chose to hand in your project) has 20 mio. Euros available for this year. The JU plans to sign the contracts before the end of 2003. A very tight schedule, compared to usual FP6 deadlines.
Heavily dominated by industry, this first Galileo call in FP6 will concentrate on the following issues: a) user segment, b) local component, c) Galileo services using EGNOS, d) market development and e) mission implementation. For all these topics but c), the JU has defined very precisely the content of the project it wants to obtain. For each of these four topics, the JU is planning to finance only one project, financed 100%. These are actually not call for proposals, but "service contracts". In topic c), the JU plans to finance "a limited number of IPs". This corresponds to a more "classical" FP6 approach.
An own legal entity, financed 50% by ESA and 50% by the Commission, the JU also has the competence to "adapt" the general rules of FP6. There are thus important differences in terms of IPR, evaluation procedures, submission of projects, etc. The JU explains its more "prescriptive" approach by the fact that the final aim of these projects is "the production of hardware and not of paperwork".
Once one is aware of these differences, the Galileo part of FP6 might prove an interesting example in addressing certain shortcomings of FP6. Although probably not with regard to SME participation, which is anyway a sensitive issue in the Aeronautics and Space priority…
For more information: http://www.galileoju.com

- **Space/Galileo: co-operation agreement with China initialed**

On 18 September, the European Commission and China initialed an agreement on the collaboration between the EU and China on certain fields of the Galileo Satellite Navigation System. The agreement also provides for a financial contribution from China by granting it stakeholding in the Galileo Joint Undertaking.
The agreement will be published -probably by the end of the year- after formal adoption by the EU Transport Council and the Chinese State Council.
More information under: http://europa.eu.int/comm/space/articles/news/news65_en.html

- **Scientific Agreement: conclusion of an agreement between the EU and Chile**

On 21 July 2003, the EU and Chile concluded an Agreement for scientific and technological co-operation. This agreement will apply to all fields of research, development and demonstration activities undertaken by the EU. As for other scientific co-operation agreements, there will be no transfer of funding, each party providing for its own funds.
Valid for an initial duration of 5 years, this agreement entered into force on 7 August 2003.

- **Science and Society: call for a European Platform of Women Scientists**

On 9 September, the Commission published a new Science and Society call for proposals. It addresses the creation of "European Platforms of Women Scientists". 2 mio. Euros are available for Specific Support Actions (SSA) "bringing together networks of women scientists and other organisations committed to promoting gender equality in science (…)".
More information under: http://fp6.cordis.lu/fp6/call_details.cfm?CALL_ID=93

Publications

▪ **IPR Helpdesk: all you wanted to know about IPR for academic participants**

The Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Helpdesk is publishing "briefing papers" on the different aspects of IPR in FP6. Their latest publication focuses on issues especially relevant for academic participants. All briefing papers can be found under:
http://www.ipr-helpdesk.org/controlador.jsp?cuerpo=cuerpoSubsecBP&seccion=FP6&len=en

▪ **"Entrepreneurial innovation in Europe": book published by DG Entreprise**

Based on 11 recent studies about innovation policy in Europe, this book assesses the impact of current policies and outlines the opportunity for a new model for a "smart innovation policy". The book reviews reports in the following fields: a) innovation policies and activities in the accession and candidate countries, b) initiatives in Europe to link better innovation and job creation, c) the funding of innovation, d) innovation and industrial policies and e) corporate taxation. This publication can be downloaded under:
http://www.cordis.lu/innovation-policy/studies/ca_study4.htm

▪ **Science and Society Expressions of Interests published**

Between 1 April and 2 June 2003, the Commission invited interested parties to present Expressions of Interest (EoI) in the field of Science and Society. The goal was to give the Commission an idea of the themes that stakeholders want to see addressed in the next calls for proposals. Around 200 EoIs were submitted and can be consulted on the following –searchable address: http://fp6.cordis.lu/eoi/ss/eoi_srch.cfm

▪**CORDIS launches FP6 step-by-step**

This new section of the CORDIS web-site is built up as a "walk-through" guide of FP6. From general questions about FP6 and the differences with FP5 to the actual preparation, submission and management of projects, it links up with all the relevant parts of CORDIS.
http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/stepbystep/home.html

SwissCore Küche

▪ **SwissCore Seminar 2003: Looking beyond the Framework programme**

On 13 and 14 November 2003, SwissCore will organise its yearly seminar on the status and latest developments in European research. Usually centred on the EU Framework programmes, the seminar will this year concentrate on European funding opportunities for research beyond the EU Framework programmes.
EUREKA, COST, INTAS, as well as opportunities offered -amongst other- by the European Space Agency, the European Science Foundation and EUROHORCs will be presented to the participants by competent speakers from these organisations.
The participation of Swiss information "multiplicators" interested in European and international research opportunities (academies, foundations, international affairs department of universities or federal offices, etc.) is very welcome.
The seminar will take place in Brussels and the participation is free of charge.
For a detailed programme and more information, please contact SwissCore under: infodesk@swisscore.be