

SwissCore Synopsis Research

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European strategy on Nanotechnology

Nanotechnology – a collective term for science and technology at the scale of atoms and molecules – is often referred to as “horizontal” or “enabling” technology since it can pervade a very broad range of technological sectors. These include areas such as medical applications, information technologies, energy production, materials science, manufacturing, security, etc. In other words, nanotechnology is by its nature highly interdisciplinary and, as such, both depends on and contributes to specific solutions to address its potential for full exploitation.

On 12 May, the European Commission presented its Communication “Towards a European strategy for nanotechnology”, in which it discusses some of the main upcoming challenges and tries to establish a coherent strategy of how Europe should address them.

Also in Europe (EU Member States and FP6 Associated States), public funding for nanotechnology has risen from 200 million Euro in 1997 to presently approx. 1 billion Euro (with around two thirds from national and regional programmes) but the Communication warns that European R&D in nanotechnology risks becoming too fragmented with a disparate range of rapidly evolving programmes and funding sources. In the US, research efforts are much more coordinated, with over two thirds of the total funding being allocated as part of the National Nanotechnology Initiative, which has had an annual budget of 220 million Dollar in 2000 and 750 million Dollar in 2003.

This Commission Communication is refreshing in that it is not just an additional reiteration of the Lisbon target in yet another field but it also addresses some very concrete issues which in some cases are specific to the area of nanotechnology.

The Commission identified five areas in which the EU should enhance and focus its efforts:

1) Research and Development: building the momentum

Investment in nanotechnology R&D should be increased both at Community and Member State level in a complementary and synergetic way. At EU level, nanotechnology was identified as a thematic priority in FP6 and over 20 IPs and NoEs have already been selected for funding. The setting up of European Technology Platforms are a further way to bring together interested stakeholders, develop a long-term shared vision and secure financing. At Member State level, the various national programmes should be better coordinated in order to stimulate the take-up of nanotechnology into applications. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) or ERA-NET could be appropriate ways to achieve this.

The Commission also recommends (I) using foresight methodology to interact and think about possible developments and challenges in nanotechnology and (II) preparing roadmaps for market sectors having reached sufficient maturity.

2) Infrastructure: European “Poles of Excellence”

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of nanotechnology, the investment for infrastructure must often be shared between organisations from different disciplines and backgrounds (academia, industry, etc.) and at different local, regional or national level, making coordination even more important.

World-class infrastructure is needed in Europe, dealing with all aspects of interdisciplinary R&D, education, and prototyping. With infrastructure becoming very expensive, they will, by consequence, be very limited in number. So there will have to be discussion on how resources could be allocated to places selected in Europe. For this process, both the European Technology Platforms as well as ESFRI, the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure, will have to provide input. Synergies with the European Investment Bank, European Investment Fund and Structural Funds will be explored.

Infrastructure for nanoelectronics had already been identified as a priority in the “Quick start programme” of the “European initiative for growth” in November 2003.

3) Investing in human resources

In order to fully exploit the potential of nanotechnology, Europe needs “a population of interdisciplinary researchers and engineers who can generate knowledge and ensure that it is, in turn, transferred to industry” and “properly trained toxicologists and risk assessors”. This will require potentially novel forms of teaching, not only moving beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries but also stimulating an entrepreneurial mindset and the openness for life-long learning.

4) Industrial innovation, from knowledge to technology

That innovation is a key factor in economic growth has become a commonplace. In addition to the standard conditions (such as functioning of competitive markets, a fiscal policy that supports innovation, financial instruments, skilled human resources, public-private partnerships, etc.), nanotechnology relies on progress in three specific additional domains: (1) patenting: nanotechnology brings together researchers and industrialists from different scientific fields, i.e. also with different cultures and attitudes. This may be a barrier to the establishment of common IPR guidelines. Furthermore, the nature of nanotechnology raises relevant questions as to what should or should not be patentable (e.g. on the level of individual molecules). (2) regulation: appropriate regulation in the fields of public health and consumer protection is essential to ensure confidence from consumers, workers and investors. It should be kept in mind that existing regulation often relies on parameters which may turn out to be inappropriate for some applications of nanotechnology (e.g. threshold values of production volumes or mass, below which a substance may be exempt from regulation). (3) metrology: reliable and quantitative means of characterisation as well as measurements techniques will be required, i.e. common metrology and standards need to be developed. At the nano-scale, where it is often difficult to distinguish the effects of the measuring instruments from the measurement itself, this is a challenging activity.

5) Integrating the societal dimension

The Commission confirms that public trust and acceptance of nanotechnology are crucial for its long-term development. Consequently, it calls for an “open, traceable and verifiable development of nanotechnology, according to democratic principles”. This should include both an open debate about potential risks of nanotechnology as well as increased information about nanotechnology and its applications to the public. In such a two-way dialogue, “the general public’s views are taken into account and may be seen to influence decisions concerning R&D policy”.

Due to their small size, nanoparticles might pose specific problems concerning health or environmental risks. Similarly, special care might have to be taken regarding production, disposal, handling, storage and transport of nanoparticles. To find the appropriate methodology for risk assessment and management is particularly challenging since predicting the properties of nanoparticles requires that classical physics and quantum mechanical effects are both taken into account.

The European Commission would like to see international cooperation strengthened and suggests collecting common shared principles for R&D in nanotechnology in a voluntary common framework, e.g. a “code of conduct”.

This Commission Communication is a non-binding document but in each of the strategic fields identified, the Commission lists concrete actions to be undertaken by Member States and/or the Commission.

The Communication can be found under

ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/nanotechnology/docs/nano_com_en.pdf

Commission Communication on FP7 postponed

While most of us are kept busy with the kick-off and running of the first projects in FP6, there is already a lot of conceptual work underway with regard to the preparations for FP7. Issues which are addressed in this context are, among others, basic research (which level and instrument of funding should be made available at European level?), technology platforms (how should the appropriate topics be chosen? what are the appropriate legal instruments for implementation?) or mobility (how can the very frustrating over-subscription rate seen in the first calls under FP6 be avoided in the future?).

To provide a first insight into the Commission's current thinking and also to further stimulate the discussion, the European Commission had announced the publication of a Communication laying out the main lines of action of FP7 for mid-May 2004.

However, to the surprise of just about everyone involved, no agreement could be reached at the preparatory meeting two days before the decisive meeting of the Commission where the decision about its publication should have been taken. Consequently, the long-awaited Communication was not published at the planned date.

The major points of disagreement seem to have lied at a managerial level. DG ADMIN suggested that the Commission generally separate more clearly implementation activities from policy making and concentrate more on the latter. In other words, the activities formulated in the six "objectives" or "axes" of FP7 should be outsourced to European Executive Agencies and not managed by Commission services themselves. This was opposed by DG RTD which felt that, first, a lot of the implementation activities also had a policy aspect and should be kept within the Commission. Second, DG RTD is reluctant to launch a whole series of Executive Agencies without collecting some experiences with that instrument first. DG RTD's concept is to establish such an Agency for the implementation of an ERC but not for all the other "axes" at this time point.

Some uncertainties about the financial framework also remain. DG RTD is fighting for the 40 billion Euro outlined in the Financial Perspectives. However, these have not been adopted yet and it is currently unclear what the amount finally allocated for FP7 will be. Still, even in this situation of financial uncertainty, working and thinking about FP7 will have to continue. In case the budget would in the end be considerably lower than the 40 billion, it would have to be decided then what impact this would have on the implementation (or number) of the "axes" suggested.

So the Communication went back into consultation and discussions are now going on at the highest levels. At the Competitiveness Council on 17/18 May, Commissioner Busquin could only inform orally on the planned progress towards FP7.

As possible dates for a second attempt to launch this Communication, there are rumours about the first half of June. However, there are also voices warning that it is far from clear that this time the paper would go through more easily. Especially the first point (on the implementation vs. policy role of the Commission) touches a basic point of the understanding of the Commission's role in the EU framework, which will probably need some more profound discussion.

The "Council Regulation laying down the statute for executive agencies to be entrusted with certain tasks in the management of Community programmes" can be found under:

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2003/l_011/l_01120030116en00010008.pdf

Consultation for a new “Action Plan for Innovation”

Innovation is recognised as one of the key elements in strengthening competitiveness and in getting closer to reaching the ambitious Lisbon target by 2010. In the process of developing a new innovation action plan, the DG Enterprise has launched a public consultation to collect contributions from innovation stakeholders in Europe.

The Action Plan for Innovation complements the two earlier Commission papers in this field, i.e. the Action Plan on Investing in Research, and the Agenda for Entrepreneurship. By placing innovation at the heart of enterprises, research and entrepreneurship should be pulled together to create sustainable added value and growth.

The Action Plan addresses mainly the three areas of regulation, market for knowledge, and access to resources but also developing good governance for innovation and ensuring the availability of necessary information.

Six objectives are spelled out, each with indications of which actors should be involved (Commission, Member States, regions, etc.):

- **Objective 1: Innovation everywhere:** Promote innovation in all forms, technological or other. Improve innovation performance and competitiveness at enterprise level by disseminating excellence, learning from the best. Spread innovation in all sectors and in millions of SMEs and not only among a limited number of high-tech "happy few".
- **Objective 2: Get innovation on the market:** Improve the regulatory and administrative environment for innovation, in particular technical regulations, standards and competition rules.
- **Objective 3: Knowledge for innovation:** Stimulate the dissemination and the absorption of knowledge (including technologies), in particular by improving the use and management of intellectual property, by encouraging the opening of innovation systems and clusters to new ideas, technologies and players and by enhancing the R&D Framework Programme's impact on innovation.
- **Objective 4: Invest in innovation:** Increase investment in innovation by exploiting the Community sources of finance (financial instruments, European Structural Funds) and by increased cooperation with the European Investment Bank. Ensure that state aid policy works to stimulate innovation.
- **Objective 5: Skills for innovation:** Foster the development of "innovation skills" and creativity, while facilitating the mobility of "knowledge workers".
- **Objective 6: Efficient innovation governance:** Mobilise Member States, regions, enterprises and other innovation actors. Promote and improve innovation governance.

The consultation is open until 31 May 2004. The draft Action Plan on Innovation as well as more information on the consultations and questionnaires are available from

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/innovation/consultation/index.htm>

Court of Auditors gives indirect FP7 input

With its special report 1/2004, the European Court of Auditors has added a new input into the current discussions on the preparation of FP7. In this report published on 23 April, the Court kills off an old and generally accepted idea in Brussels whereby it is necessary to strengthen procedures and administrative requirements imposed on researchers in order to prevent fraud, irregularities and errors in the management of the European Framework Programmes for Research.

Indeed, the Court's analysis of the FP5 management highlights the following points:

- The complexity of the financial rules fixing the participation of the European Commission to the costs of a project "hinders the effective management of financial and

administrative aspects by the Commission and is an unnecessary complication for participants”.

- The fact that the seven specific programmes of FP5 were managed jointly by five Directorates-General also caused a fragmentation of programmes resulting in “dilution of responsibilities, duplication of functions and increased need for co-ordination and consultation”.
- Another factor of fragmentation was that, under FP5, the Commission did not develop a common or integrated IT system for proposal, contract and project management. “The IT systems deployed by the Commission were inadequate, not least because of insufficient investment.”

In fact, when setting up FP6, the Commission had tried to find a solution to the key issue of the complexity of costs following a first report of the Court but its proposal was not retained by the Council and the Parliament. The rules that were subsequently adopted for setting the financial contribution of the Community in FP6 thus only partially addressed the Court’s concerns (external audits and possibilities for sanctions).

Given the current discussions on the preparation on FP7, it is certainly not a coincidence that the Court raised these issues this spring...

The Report of the Court as well as the Commission’s responses can be found under:

http://www.eca.eu.int/audit_reports/special_reports/docs/2004/rs01_04en.pdf

Security research programme should give “security through technology”

Denouncing the current artificial divide between defense and civil research and calling for the establishment of a European Security Research Programme (ESRP), the Group of Personalities for Security Research set up at the end of 2003 presented its report “Research for a Secure Europe” on 15 March 2004.

The Group of Personalities identified a series of structural deficiencies which should be remedied in order to ensure a better protection of the EU territory and citizens as well as the success of EU missions outside the Union:

- the divide between defence and civil research in Europe;
- the absence of specific frameworks for security research at the EU level;
- the limited cooperation between Member States and the lack of coordination among national and European efforts and
- the lack of public research funding for security research.

Identifying research and technology as “key force enablers” to ensure more security in and for Europe, the report thus argues the need for a European Security Research Programme which would start in 2007 as well as for a “better combination of national, intergovernmental and Community research efforts across the civil-military continuum”.

The sketch of such a programme is also outlined in the report. In short, it should:

- have minimum funding of 1 billion Euro per year;
- fund capability-related research projects up to the level of demonstrators;
- seek to maximize the benefits of multi-purpose aspects of technology;
- focus on interoperability and connectivity as key elements of cross-border and inter-service cooperation;
- fund projects, if justified, up to 100% of costs;
- be lead by a “Security Research Advisory Board”;
- effectively coordinate with and complements other European research activities, whether funded at Community, national or intergovernmental level.

The Preparatory Action towards a European Security Research Programme for which calls for proposals are currently open (until 23 June 2004) represents a test phase for a future Security Research Programme. Situated outside the realm of FP6 and making use of its own types of

projects and rules, it will run until 2006 with a total budget of 65 million Euro (see also Synopsis 2004/1).

The European Commission, in an important policy paper to be published in June and outlining its plans in the field of research and technology for the time beyond FP6, plans beside FP7 to set up a Security Research Programme along the lines above. The status of Switzerland in a programme which would be outside FP7 remains an open issue.

The report of the Group of Personalities can be found under:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/security/news/article_756_en.html

Publication of the Second Implementation Report on a the Mobility Strategy for ERA

After the Lisbon Summit, where the need for abundant and mobile human resources in EU research was recognised at political level, the Commission adopted a Mobility Strategy (COM(2001)331) defining a number of actions needed to create -jointly with Member States- a more favourable environment for researchers in the EU. A first Implementation Report was then published in February 2003 focusing on activities initialled by the Commission (see Synopsis 2003/1).

Since then, a number of initiatives were taken both at the level of the Commission and the Member States in areas of direct concern to researchers. All these initiatives are listed in the second Implementation Report published on 1 April 2004. The report especially emphasises the following:

- initiatives by Member States to enhance the mobility of researchers through their national research policies;
- improvements of the regulatory and administrative issues both through national and EU initiatives (accelerated immigration procedures, social security improvements for researchers or favourable taxation conditions for researchers);
- initiatives to improve the information and practical assistance to mobile researchers (EU Mobility Web Portal and setting up a network of Mobility Centres throughout Europe);
- other initiatives still to be developed further such as the benchmarking of Human Ressources in R&D, the development of comparable data on international researcher mobility, the social visibility of the career of researcher and industry-academic mobility.

This report shows that, since the Lisbon Summit, the issue of the mobility of researchers has not only gained in terms of political visibility but has also generated numerous practical improvements for mobile researchers. Many initiatives are currently underway or are just being launched –see article below- in order to complete a still “patchy” European environment for mobile researchers.

An electronic version of the Second Implementation Report on a the Mobility Strategy for ERA can be found under:

<http://www.iglortd.org/members/SWISSCORE/Policy%20docs/Mobility%20strategy.pdf>

Scientific visas: the EU wants to become more attractive for Third country researchers

As indicated in the article above, the European Commission has committed itself to take concrete measures in order to enhance the EU’s attractiveness for researchers from all over the world and to remove obstacles to mobility. According to the European Commission, the current trend in the opposite direction in the USA, also provides the EU with a “window of opportunity” in this field

DG Research’s last initiative, in a joint effort with DG Justice and Home Affairs, has been to present on 16 March 2004 a proposal for a directive and two recommendations on the admission of third country researchers to the European Union.

The Directive, whose adoption will be subject to unanimity in the Council of Ministers after consultation of the European Parliament, provides for a fast track procedure for the admission of foreign researchers. The main concept is to create a specific residence permit for third country researchers independently from their contractual status.

Research organisations would play a key role in this process, as they would have to certify the status of the researchers in a hosting agreement acknowledging the existence of a valid research project, as well as the possession by the researcher of the necessary scientific skills, financial means and a health insurance.

On the basis of this hosting agreement, the immigration authorities of the host country would deliver a residence permit. After that, the researcher would be free to move within the Schengen Member States for the purpose of the scientific project.

The main advantages of this new system would be:

- a strong acceleration of the administrative procedure to deliver the residence permit (approximately 30 days);
- the fact that third country researchers who are already legal residents in a Member State would have the possibility to submit applications for such residence permits directly to the authorities in that Member State without having to return home first;
- similarly, researchers wanting to prolong their stay in another Member State would not need to return to their country of origin to submit the application.

Even though the Commission is optimistic and believes that a political agreement on this Directive can be achieved this summer, the Directive could hardly be transposed into national legislation before 31 December 2006.

For this reason, in order to improve the admission and residency of foreign researchers until that date and encourage an early implementation of some of the above measures, the Commission has also put forward two Recommendations to Member States:

The first Recommendation covers four areas in which the Member States are invited to introduce measures such as the simplification of admission of foreign scientists as well as of the prolongation of their stays, the encouragement of family reunification or the appointment of a specific person of contact in Embassies and Consulates.

The second Recommendation urges Member States to adopt uniform visas for short-stay (less than 3 months) by Third country researchers as well as to reduce the amount of time necessary to issue such short-term visas.

The Commission's proposals for the Directive and the two Recommendations can be found below:

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2004/com2004_0178en01.pdf

Light remains red for the Community Patent

In spite of the efforts of the Irish Presidency, EU Ministers meeting on 18 May for a Competitiveness Council could not agree on a compromise for an EU-wide patent.

Proposed in 2000 by the European Commission, the Community Patent is intended to make it cheaper and easier to protect new inventions in all EU Member States with a single procedure. Although the EU patent is widely regarded as a key element to help boost the EU's competitiveness, Ministers have been unable to make progress on this issue since March 2003 where a political agreement had been announced.

The main sticking point this time appears to have been the question of how to treat infringements of patents which might arise as a result of mistranslations. Indeed, Ministers had agreed in 2003 that patent applications should be filed in either English, German or French. In a second step, the patent claims (the shortest but most important part of the patent as it defines the scope of the protection) would then have to be translated in all 19 official languages of the

EU. During their meeting, Ministers could not agree on who should decide upon the legal validity of a translation and about how to deal with the implications of incorrect translations.

In order to move forward with this dossier, unanimity was required but Germany, France, Spain and Portugal voted against the Irish compromise and Italy abstained. The Netherlands, which will take over the Presidency of the EU in July have already announced that they would not attempt to revive negotiations on the Community Patent. A last chance for a decision on this issue will then be the next meeting of European Heads of States and Governments to which Ireland has decided to bring up the matter.

Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council of 17-18 May 2004:

http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/80522.pdf

6th Framework Programme (FP6)

New version of the Financial Guidelines published

The European Commission published in April a new version of the FP6 Financial Guidelines. These guidelines giving financial and legal information to researchers participating in FP6 will be updated throughout the framework programme. For this reason, these guidelines will keep a "draft" status.

The April 2004 version can be found under:

http://dbs.cordis.lu/fep-cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=&DOC=1&TBL=EN_DOCS&RCN=EN_RCN:2034005&CALLER=FP6_LIB

Lists of FP6 evaluators available

Detailed lists of expert-evaluators who were active in 2003 to evaluate FP6 proposals have recently been posted on the address below.

A few facts to be noted:

- On about 4500 experts listed, 91 are Swiss (or currently working in Swiss institutions). It represents about 2%.
- Of the 91 "Swiss" experts, only 8 are women (8%). As a reminder, the Commission was originally aiming at around 40% women evaluators for FP6...
- The thematic priorities that made use of the highest number of experts were: IST (1517), Marie Curie (987) and Health (800). It is in these same priorities that the most Swiss experts were active: respectively 26, 15 and 16.
- Also worth noting: in the Health priority, more than 100 experts were from the USA whereas in IST there were only 25.

The lists can be found on the address below:

<http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/experts2003.htm>

Registrations as expert-evaluators can be made under:

http://www.cordis.lu/experts/fp6_candidature.htm

◆ Publications

EURAB Report on interdisciplinary research

A EURAB (European Research Advisory Board) Working Group published a report on the question of which barriers still exist to interdisciplinary research in Europe and how they could be overcome. (The report uses the term "interdisciplinary" to cover both "multi-" as well as "interdisciplinary" approaches.)

The report reiterates the observation that many current problems (e.g. in areas such as globalisation, environment, health, defence and security) can only be addressed using an interdisciplinary approach. There are, however, many barriers to this type of research, e.g.:

- The traditional one-department, one-discipline structure of most universities does not encourage interdisciplinary co-operation.
- The established funding systems both within universities and from research funding agencies may make the launch of new interdisciplinary research groups difficult.
- Journals in new interdisciplinary fields may take time to become established and reach high-impact values. Publishing in these journals may not be rewarded appropriately which will also be a problem regarding interdisciplinary career structures.
- Undergraduate and sometimes also graduate education systems are not geared to the needs of new interdisciplinary research areas.

According to EURAB, these issues should be tackled at a number of levels:

Definition of a discipline: The number of disciplinary divisions into which research funding is allocated or in which researchers are appointed for professorships should be reduced in order to stimulate interdisciplinary proposals and approaches and to cover broader fields.

Education and training of researchers: Interdisciplinary training does not necessarily mean that a person becomes “interdisciplinary”. However, care should be taken that at all (and also very early) levels in academic training, bridges to other disciplines and sectors are built up and encouraged. This will lead to greater openness and respect for other approaches and also increase employability by industry.

University structures and policies: Flexibility should be introduced into the established departmental and faculty structures of most universities. Possible approaches could be the establishment of *virtual research centres* (where researchers contribute to the virtual research centre but administratively remain with their old departments), *new research centres* (often a way to develop the critical mass or the interdisciplinarity needed for emerging areas) or *core/shared facilities* (to minimise administrative barriers to access to high-cost equipment).

Research funding for institutions and systems: Funding of an interdisciplinary group by a single funding agency or also jointly by several funding agencies is strongly encouraged. A move towards calls based more on “research themes” or “solving key issues” than discipline-defined calls might be a helpful tendency. To ensure high-quality proposals, “research funding agencies must ensure that they have the facility to evaluate interdisciplinary proposals appropriately”. Furthermore, the provision of overheads is identified as an important element in promoting interdisciplinary research.

In all four areas, EURAB issued concrete recommendations for the Commission Services along the same lines.

The report can be found on EURAB’s website on

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/eurab/pdf/eurab_04_009_interdisciplinarity_research_final.pdf

Study and catalogue of European technology transfer institutions

There is a view that Europe today is not receiving an adequate return on its investments into research and technology because of less and slower commercialisation of research results.

Through an earlier study by the European Commission on industry–science relations technology transfer institutions had been earmarked as an important instrument for better IPR-management and commercialisation of research results. This study and catalogue are building up on the results of this first study.

This new study explores the existence of technology transfer institutions in the EU-Member States as well as provides indications on their existence in the new Member and Associated countries. Besides creating a database listing over 1500 technology transfer institutions

(including their contact details), the authors have analysed the current status, type and services offered by these institutions as well as highlighted some trends for the future.

The catalogue (requires Microsoft Access) as well as the analysis paper can be found under the following link:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/competitiveness/index.htm#ittse

Otherwise a CD can be ordered from:

European Commission

Enterprise DG

Unit A5 - Competitiveness, analysis and benchmarking

B-1049 Brussels

Belgium

Fax: +32 2 296 62 84

E-mail: entr-competit-benchmarkg@cec.eu.int

Opinion of the European Group on Ethics about umbilical cord blood banking

At the end of March 2004, the European Group on Ethics (EGE), an independent and multidisciplinary group advising the European Commission on ethical issues linked to scientific and technological development published a report on the ethical aspects of umbilical cord blood banking.

EGE recommends increased support for public cord blood banks, which store cord blood samples for allogeneic (i.e. between different individuals) transplantations. However, EGE discourages the latest activities of private cord blood banks which offer to store cord blood of a new-born for potential use in the future (autologous use). It has not been demonstrated that cells usable for transplantation can be stored for more than 15 years, and in many cases, there is no evidence so far that the use of a patient's own cord blood would be preferable to the use of his/her own bone marrow or to well-matched allogeneic stem cells from donations. Still, a complete ban of such activities "would represent an undue restriction on the freedom of enterprise and the freedom of choice of individuals/couples".

The full report is 187 pages long and comprises a full version of the EGE's opinion in English, French and German as well as a study initiated for the preparation of the opinion "A worldwide study of umbilical cord cell banking".

The full report can be found under:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/european_group_ethics/docs/PublOp19.pdf

Statistics on Science and Technology in Europe

This spring, Eurostat published a new set of statistics on science and technology in Europe.

The data collected concentrates on the following topics:

- R&D investment in Europe
- Human resources in R&D
- Technological productivity and competitiveness

This 127 pages report has been split into two parts that can be found below:

Part 1

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-product/EN?catalogue=Eurostat&product=KS-57-03-104--N-EN&mode=download>

Part 2

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-product/EN?catalogue=Eurostat&product=KS-57-03-104--N-EN&mode=download>

SwissCore Apero

On 15 April, SwissCore invited the newly arrived –and the more established- Swiss in Brussels to our traditional Spring apero. As usual, the goal was to present to them in an informal framework the role and activities of SwissCore as well as the general issues pertaining to Swiss-EU relations in the field of research policy.

We were very happy with the attendance of about 20 people which shows that there is interest both for SwissCore as a representation of Swiss science and research policy but also as a platform towards EU institutions.

The Swiss Mission to the EU was also well represented and Jürg Burri, Science and Technology Counsellor, gave the participants an overview concerning the role of the Mission as well as of the Science Counsellor in Brussels.

Swiss Science Briefing on university strategies

On 22 April, SwissCore and the Swiss Mission to the EU jointly organised a Swiss Science Briefing on the topic: “How to Build a World-Class University”. The objective of the Swiss Science Briefings is to present in Brussels input and Swiss good practices on issues currently in the discussion at EU level. Shortly before a major international conference in Liège on “The Europe of Knowledge 2020 – a Vision for University-based Research and Innovation”, this Swiss Science Briefing thus concentrated on the topic of university strategies.

After a welcome note by Dante Martinelli, Swiss Ambassador to the European Communities, and an introduction by Martina Weiss, Head of Office of SwissCore, Prof. Patrick Aebischer, President of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) presented his vision of a strategy for his institution. Thinking in global terms, Prof. Aebischer highlighted the following points:

- There are three factors of success in order to achieve worldwide excellence:
 - attract the best students;
 - attract the best teachers;
 - and ensure adequate financial resources.
- In order to be competitive and fulfil the above success factors, universities need a strong mission, strong leadership and more political autonomy.
- European universities should replicate the positive aspects of the US system: introduce the concept of “Research University”, promote young people through tenure-track, better structure the post-graduate system through graduate schools and develop the branding of their institutions as well as an Alumni culture.
- But they should also keep the positive aspects coming from the European model: have long-term goals in research, keep the openness of the system (low fees) and defend multilingualism and humanities in order to enrich the curricula.

Reacting to these points, Nikolaus G. van der Pas, Director General at the European Commission DG Education and Culture, insisted on the need to also include a European dimension in such strategies. According to Mr. van der Pas, developing a culture of mobility in Europe, creating networks of universities to better profile Europe in the world and to increase the quality of education and research and encouraging European universities to be more complementary and concentrate on their strengths are currently the main issues in order to strengthen this European dimension.

A lively panel discussion between the speakers and the public was then moderated by Prof. Heidi Diggelmann, President of the National Research Council of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Cordis reported about this Swiss Science Briefing on:
http://dbs.cordis.lu/fep/cgi/srchidadb?ACTION=D&SESSION=70672004-5-27&DOC=1&TBL=EN_NEWS&RCN=EN_RCN_ID:21932&CALLER=EN_NEWS



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Director General, DG Education and Culture