

SwissCore Synopsis Research

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This edition of the SwissCore Synopsis Research as well as previous editions are available on our website.

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Hearings in the European Parliament with the Commissioners designate

Even though the names of the old/new Commissioners were publicly presented in mid-August by the new President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, they are still awaiting a formal vote of approval by the European Parliament. To enable the MEPs to take an informed decision, the Commissioners designate first had to reply to a written questionnaire, (one generic part for all Nominee Commissioners), one specific to their future policy area), second they had to present themselves and their ideas at a hearing with the respective parliamentary Committee between end of September and early October.

Janez Potočnik, Commissioner designate for Research, presented himself very much in line with the achievements and aims of his predecessor Philippe Busquin. He promised to push for a doubling of the EU research budget, albeit he admitted it would not be an easy task. Commissioner designate Potočnik promised to continue or initiate corrective measures to simplify and remove shortcomings of the current Framework Programme. As for other issues addressed during the hearing (e.g. support for SME, pursuit of the 3% target, ITER, stem cell research, need for support to humanities, link between academia and industry, etc.), he gave very supportive and positive statements which will, in the time of his mandate as Commissioner, certainly have to become more concrete. Overall, he positioned himself as sincere and open personality who does not have an answer to all questions yet but who is certainly willing to learn and to listen to everyone willing to discuss.

In its assessment letter, the ITRE Committee expressed its appreciation of Mr. Potočnik's "clear statements in favour of basic science, simplification of procedures and stimulation of the research potential". Furthermore, "the nominee was perceived as honest, sensitive to the human factor, with excellent communication skills, knowledgeable and well prepared, but also willing to listen and discuss possible points of disagreement", and it was estimated that the Commissioner designate possesses "the dynamism and political determination" to fulfil his mandate as Commissioner.

Günter Verheugen, current Commissioner for Enlargement and Commissioner designate for Enterprise and Industry, will not only be responsible for the two areas of space and security, where the EU wants to strengthen its research activities, but he is also specifically in charge for competitiveness. This means, as he stated in his hearing with the ITRE Committee, that "every proposal from the Commission needs to meet the competitiveness test". Along the same lines, Mr. Verheugen gave a strong support for the Lisbon strategy and that it should remain a top EU priority to reach this target. He also asked the national governments to give more weight to the process and to stop internal fighting in order to allow for higher competitiveness on an international level. Regarding REACH, the Commission's approach towards a future chemicals policy ("**R**egistration, **E**valuation, **A**uthorisation, and **R**estriction of **C**hemicals"), Mr. Verheugen was clear that it should be functional and usable and that companies should not collapse under the weight of the related costs. Still, there is an environmental need for this regulation which also had to be taken into account.

Mr. Verheugen's "polished performance, his commitment to dialogue, his determination to improve legislation, and his ability to make a convincing case for Europe" was appreciated by the MEPs, as expressed in the assessment letter of ITRE.

Viviane Reding, current Commissioner for Education and Culture and Commissioner designate for Information Society and Media, made the point that she would act as "Commissioner for Innovation, Inclusion and Creativity". She promised to support the MEDIA programme with adequate funds and emphasised her commitment to address inequality of access to information technology. Greater openness to information technology is, according to Ms Redding, the key to conquering new markets and thus, to strengthen European competitiveness. The MEPs questioned Ms Reding on her opinion on the impact of ICT legislation on SMEs and the Lisbon strategy, gender mainstreaming in the Information Society, security of networks, promotion of

cultural diversity and many others. On the very topical issue of software patents, she commented that “ultimately, it is a commercial problem and we have to reconcile interests”.

The ITRE Committee favoured her nomination as Commissioner, showing respect for her “skills in the field of media policy” but also commenting that “a deeper knowledge of electronic communications and Information Society related matters would have been expected and a stronger commitment in the field of media pluralism would also have been appreciated”.

Now that the Committees have expressed their opinion on the different Commissioners designate, the Plenary will have to vote on the ensemble of the proposed college of Commissioners in late October. In contrast to the research-related candidates described here, some other Commissioners designate were judged less favourably. If President Barroso sticks to the nominations of his future colleagues in the Commission (and he already signalled support for his team even after the negative assessments by some Committees), the only possibility for the Parliament will be either to reject the entire Commission – or to accept the nominations as they are now. The second option is generally considered to be the more likely one.

The web site of the European Parliament on the “Investiture Procedure of the 2004-2009 Commission - Hearings of the Commissioners Designate” (including questionnaires and written replies of all Commissioners designate) can be found under:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/hearings/commission/2004_comm/default_en.htm

The assessment letters issued by the different parliamentary Committees are available under:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/hearings/commission/2004_comm/result_en.htm

News in Brief

EU-Research Policy:

Working towards the establishment of a European Research Council, Commission unveils principles and operational parameters

Officially launched by the Commission in its Communication “Europe and basic research” (see Synopsis 2004/1) and supported by the EU Ministers at the informal Competitiveness Council of July 2004, the idea of creating a European Research Council (ERC) is slowly taking shape.

The European Commission is currently in the process of defining principles and implementation mechanisms in order to allow for the support of research conducted by individual teams in competition at European level. At the end of September, the Commission unveiled an interim working document on the basic principles which should drive on an initiative such as the ERC (autonomy, transparency, efficiency, means, bottom-up research, accountability) as well as on a number of operational parameters for implementation (structure and administration, scientific scope, disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, evaluation, peer review, grants, evaluation of the funding mechanism).

Further work on these issues is needed and the Commission will work to address the following points in the next few months:

- the choice of an appropriated structure to meet the requirements set out by the principles mentioned above;
- the establishment of a first “Governing Council” by a group of independent and high level experts;
- further work on the operational framework (such as interdisciplinary research, peer review and evaluation, grant characteristics, etc.).

The working document can be found under:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/future/pdf/basicrtd_note_290904_en.pdf

Council of Ministers discuss research issues: ITER, nanotechnologies and future of EU research policy

Meeting on 24 September in Brussels, the Competitiveness Council had the following research topics on its agenda:

- Discussion on FP7 and the future of European Research

Ministers discussed the Commission Communication on Making research the key to Europe's future and adopted a set of conclusions. Although a first in-depth debate on FP7 will only take place in Council on 25-26 November, the following points can be noted:

 - With regard to FP6, Ministers acknowledged the Marimon report and endorsed its conclusions with regard to the need for simplification of the administrative and financial procedures. Ministers also welcomed the Commission's intention to implement corrective measures under FP6.
 - With regard to FP7, Ministers welcomed the Commission Communication on the future of EU research, published in June the consultation procedure launched by the Commission and the start of a policy debate on this question.
 - They stressed the importance of the FPs in ERA and the need to further strengthen ties with COST and EUREKA.
 - Overall, Ministers endorsed the general structure proposed for FP7 (6 pillars) but did not enter into discussions of the proposed budget (the Commission asked for a doubling of funds).
 - With a view to their discussions in November on this topic, Ministers asked for further clarifications from the Commission on 1) the openness to Third-Countries of FPs, 2) the participation of industry (especially SMEs), 3) the improvement of science-society relations and 4) research activities related to the support of EU policies.
- ITER (international thermo-nuclear reactor project)

Ministers had an exchange of views on this topic where negotiations about the location of the ITER site have now been blocked for 10 months. Ministers encouraged the Commission to pursue actively these negotiations in order to allow them to take a decision on the path to follow at their November meeting.
- Nanotechnologies

After a Communication on a European strategy for nanotechnology was published in May (see Synopsis 2004/2) and a consultation round on this topic closed on 30 September, Ministers adopted a set of conclusions welcoming the initiative of the Commission to draw up an Action Plan for nanotechnology in the beginning of 2005 and inviting Member States to "substantially reinforce research, development and innovation for nanotechnology".

A detailed press release can be found under:

http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/82067.pdf

Security research makes further steps into ERA

The field of Security research is making its way in the European Research Area landscape.

On the policy level, the Commission has published on 9 September a Communication on the future steps it intends to take in this field (link see below). This Communication is a reply by the European Commission to the recommendations made by a "Group of Personalities" in a report published in March 2004. There, the group of experts identified research and technology as "key force enabler" for more security in and for Europe, called for the establishment of a European Security Research Programme (ESRP) as well as sketched what this programme should look like (see Synopsis 2004/2).

The Commission Communication that was published in September welcomes and subscribes to the main thrust of these recommendations and stresses the following next steps:

- Consult/co-operate with stakeholders: In the Autumn 2004, the Commission will set up a "European Security Research Advisory Board" composed of representative of the user

community, researchers and industry in order to give advice on the content and implementation of ESRP.

- Prepare and table a proposal for an ESRP: a proposal will be tabled in early 2005 as part of the FP7 proposal. The Commission underlines that the ESRP should be attributed sufficient funding, along the lines of the recommendations by the Group of Personalities (who had asked for at least 1 billion € per year).
- Ensure an effective institutional framework: The Commission especially wants to develop synergies and co-operation with the newly established European Defence Agency.
- Find and establish efficient management structures/procedures for the management of ESRP.

On the practical level, the Preparatory action for security research (PASR), the current initiative supporting research in the field of research, is also advancing. Launched last winter and planned to last until the FP7 incorporates Security research in 2007, the PASR aims at identifying and addressing thematic issues to prepare the foundations of the programme to be launched in 2007. With this aim, the Commission had published a call for proposals in March with a closing date in June. Contracts are being negotiated now for 7 research projects and 5 supporting activities selected for funding. The Commission is thus now preparing the workprogramme for the following call for proposals to be published early 2005. A consultation meeting to this effect will be taking place on 9 November in Brussels. The budget foreseen for the year 2005 is 25 mio. €.

Overall Commission website about Security research:

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

The Commission Communication "Security Research: the next steps" can be found under:

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2004/com2004_0590en01.pdf

Decision concerning Galileo concessionaire postponed to 2005

In the spirit of public-private partnership, it is planned that the management of the Deployment and Operational Phases (from 2006 onwards) of the Galileo project should be taken over by a private sector concessionaire who will be overseen by a public body, the Galileo Supervisory Authority (established in July 2004).

Following a call for tenders managed by the Galileo Joint Undertaking, three potential concessionaires had been short-listed and invited to submit their offers by September 2004. Given this deadline, it was planned that the Joint Undertaking should be able to recommend one of the bidders to the European Commission by the end of the same month.

However, given delays at the Council level on adopting a Regulation on the implementation of the Deployment and Commercial operation phases which will set the framework (especially in terms of EU financial contribution) to these phases, the two bidders still in the run (one consortium dropped out) will not fine-tune their projects until the wider conditions are known. As Ministers are expected to take a decision on this issue in December, the Galileo Joint Undertaking is expecting to be able to recommend one of the two remaining bidders as future concessionaire in February 2005. The final political decision will then be taken by the Commission on behalf of the Council of Ministers.

For more information:

<http://www.galileoju.com/page.cfm?voce=m&idvoce=301&plugIn=1>

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy_transport/galileo/programme/index_en.htm

Commission replies to the “Marimon report” on New Instruments

On 21 June, a group of experts chaired by Prof. Marimon published its report on the mid-term review of the “new instruments” of FP6, the Networks of Excellence (NoE) and Integrated Projects (IP) (see Synopsis 2004/3). In the beginning of September, it was the Commission’s turn to reply to the content and criticisms of this report in a Communication.

From the point of view of the Commission, three main messages can be drawn from the Marimon report:

1. The objectives of the new instruments are valid to help achieve the European Research Area;
2. The scientific community needs more continuity;
3. There are still many implementation (simplification/user-friendliness) problems regarding the new instruments.

And although the Commission welcomes, with some caution, most of the conclusions of the Marimon report, it disagrees on two issues:

1. One of the recommendations of the report was that the Commission should for each point of the workprogramme specify strategic research objectives to be achieved and let researchers decide on which instrument they would find most appropriate to meet these strategic objectives. According to the Commission, such a solution would lead to a spreading of resources and would undermine the role of the Programme Committees and the influence of the Member States. On a practical level, it would be very difficult to arbitrate between proposals using different instruments for a given topic.
2. The Marimon report also asked for the requirement for long-term integration in the NoEs to be removed. The Commission rejects this view and highlights the fact that “it can support less advanced forms of cooperation and coordination than the durable integration provided for in Networks of Excellence, through “coordination actions” and “specific support actions”.”

The Commission is also very clear that all improvements and suggestions which would need a change in legislation (e.g. Rules for Participation, etc.) will have to wait for FP7. In terms of improvements to be made for the still remaining part of FP6, the Commission is putting emphasis on two main aspects:

- Clarification/differentiation of the instruments: the Commission intends to publish in the following weeks a summary table restating the goals and giving detailed indications on the scope, objectives and activities of each instrument.
- Simplification/user-friendliness: the Commission has consulted research organisations on how to practically improve the implementation of FP6. The topics raised included timeliness of information, coherence of interpretation of the New Instruments throughout the entire FP, appropriate support structures for proposers, etc.. As a result of these meetings, the Commission intends to publish an Action plan in the next few days or weeks which should pave the way for a more coherent approach from all DGs involved in FP6. Furthermore, in order to ensure a more coherent management of FP6, the Commission will also set up a training programme for all scientific officers.

Commission Communication responding to the observations and recommendations of the high-level Panel of independent experts concerning the new instruments of the 6th Framework Programme:

ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/fp6/docs/acte_final270804_en.pdf

Annexed working document:

ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/fp6/docs/working_doc_final_en.pdf

New documents and guidelines about special contract clauses, contract amendments and reporting in FP6 projects

The Commission has recently published a series of interesting new documents and guidelines to clarify certain aspects linked to the management and legal aspects of FP6 projects:

- On the use of special clauses in model contracts:
A table of the special clauses used by the Commission in model contracts has been updated in June 2004. It gives an overview of all the clauses that can be added to the EC model contract to cover specific issues and situations in research projects and Marie Curie Actions. A complementary document was posted on the website in September 2004 to give to contractors the background document on how and when the special clauses listed in the document mentioned above will be used. Normally, special clauses are inserted into the contract at the negotiation stage. However, it is also possible to insert them after the signature by means of an amendment to the contract.
- Guidelines for amendments in FP6 contracts:
These guidelines explain the principles behind the form of the amendment and the process of approval covering many of the possible scenarios.

These documents can be found under:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/working-groups/model-contract/index_en.html

Another recent document is the Reporting guidelines for FP6 research projects, which gives the detail of the different reviews and reports due during the duration of a project. It also includes a set of standard reporting templates. These guidelines can be found under:

http://www.swisscore.org/Policy%20docs/reporting_guidelines_20040709.doc

CPF editor guide – new version available

A new CPF editor users' guide was published in October. It is the version 1.7.

The guide can be found under:

ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/fp6/docs/cpf_editor_ug_v1_7_en.pdf

Publications

Technology platforms: all you wanted to know...

As announced in our last edition 2004/3, the Commission published at the end of September a report compiled by a Commission Inter-Service Group on Technology Platforms. Under the title "Technology Platforms from Definition to Implementation of a Common Research Agenda", this report explains the rationale (policy context and key features) of the Technology platforms, their current state of play (annex on the existing and planned Technology Platforms) and the possible implementation of the strategic agendas elaborated by current Technology Platforms under the 7th Framework programme.

The report can be found under:

ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/technology-platforms/docs/tp_report_defweb_en.pdf

Annual report 2003 on research activities of the European Commission

This annual report encompasses the research-related activities of the European Commission from January 2002 to March 2003. It covers the preparation and implementation of ERA, the preparation of FP6, the implementation of FP5 and the consultation and monitoring activities. In the annex, a set of summary tables give overviews of the proposals received and funded, the contracts signed, the international cooperation as well as of other topics.

The report can be found under:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/reports/2003/pdf/report-working-doc-2004_en.pdf

French publish a mid-term report on their participation to FP6

The French Education and Research Ministry has published in September a mid-term report on the participation of French researchers in the 6th Framework programme of the EU. A good summary of the main findings and statistics can be found below (French):

<http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/news/EpAuZFpyyVvsPaLIj.html>

The report "Bilan à mi-parcours de la participation française au sixième Programme Cadre" (in French) can be found under :

http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/bibliotheque/pdf/Note_ML_Bilan_6eme_PC_18-08-2004.pdf

SwissCore Küche

swisscore.org: a new web and e-mail address for SwissCore

From the beginning of October, SwissCore has a new e-mail and website address. We thank you in advance for taking note of the following new addresses:

- Martina Weiss: weiss@swisscore.org
- Danièle Rod Wiesner: rod@swisscore.org
- Katelijne Kenis: infodesk@swisscore.org
- Website: <http://www.swisscore.org>

Meeting in Brussels:

The Swiss Science Luncheon to take place on 17 November

SwissCore together with the Swiss Mission to the European Communities will hold a Science Luncheon on "Swiss Houses: Outposts for Swiss Science in USA and Asia" with Claudio Fischer, Head of International Affairs of the Swiss Science Agency.

For more information, please contact SwissCore under: infodesk@swisscore.org

The SwissCore Seminar to take place on 18-19 November

The 2004 edition of the SwissCore Seminar will be taking place on 18-19 November in Brussels. Its goal is to provide to interested circles in Switzerland a first-hand update on the developments in the EU research policy and activities.

This year, the seminar will concentrate mainly on the preparation on the 7th Framework Programme by looking at future trends but also by providing participants with an opportunity to feed in their views and inputs directly to the European Commission in two parallel sessions on possible improvements in the support for SMEs and the mobility schemes of the EU.

For more information, please contact SwissCore under: infodesk@swisscore.org

Please find below the draft version (status 22.10.2004) of the Seminar.

Thursday 18 November 2004

- 08:30 – 8:40** **Welcome**
- 08:45 – 10:15** **Evaluation of FP6 / New instruments**
Robert-Jan Smits, EC
- 10:45 – 12:15** **Current state of FP7**
Clara de la Torre, EC
- Lunch break
- 13:30 – 16:00** **Parallel Session I: Support for SME**
With Barend Verachtert, EC
- Parallel Session II: Mobility Schemes**
With Georges Bingen, EC
- 16:00 – 16:45** **The new EU Institutions**
Martina Weiss &
Danièle Rod Wiesner
- 17:00** **Apéro**
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Friday 19 November 2004

- 09:00 – 10:30** **Security Research**
N.N.
- 11:00 – 12:30** **Technology Platforms**
N.N.
- Lunch break
- 13:30 – 15:00** **Basic Research**
William Cannell, EC
- 15:00 – 16:00** **Wrap-up Session**
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