

SwissCore Synopsis

January - February 2007

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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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SwissCore Synopsis in a new format

With the start of a new Framework Programme, the SwissCore Synopsis is also modifying its format. The most important change concerns the merger of the Synopsis Research and the Synopsis Education into one publication. Moreover, as SwissCore will expand its activities into the field of innovation as of April of this year, this topic will also be regularly covered. This way, the European Commission's famed "triangle of knowledge" (Research, Innovation and Education) will find its reflection in our new "SwissCore Synopsis".

The second change concerns the frequency of publication: as we merged the Synopsis Research and Synopsis Education, as well as the planned Synopsis Innovation into one publication, the new SwissCore Synopsis will now be published ten times per year. This way, you will get the latest news more frequently.

Despite these novelties, the content and style of the articles will not be changed. We will keep the mix of news, analysis and summary of background that has prevailed so far and is appreciated by many of our readers. We will also keep reporting about the policy as well as the practical aspects of European research, innovation and education programmes, and also cover the general policy aspects in these fields. And as we have done previously, we intend to publish on an irregular basis special editions of the SwissCore Synopsis that will focus on a specific aspect or programme.

Outlook on 2007

The year 2007 started on a good note: the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development 2007-2013 (FP7) was launched as planned on 1 January. A large series of calls for proposal had already been issued on 22 December 2006. Despite some hiccups due to legal and financial issues that are currently being clarified (see article below), the new Framework Programme was generally applauded, due to its increased budget (€50.5 billion, a 60% increase compared to FP6) and to a series of novelties, the most striking one being the creation of a European Research Council (ERC). For the first time, the European Union will support "research at the frontiers of knowledge" (i.e. basic research) done by individual teams, which will be selected solely on the basis of excellence.

Another novelty concerns the increased support to industry-driven research through the instrument of the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI). The European Commission will most likely present the first proposals for JTI to the Council of Ministers in April. Also within FP7, the mechanism of the Risk-Sharing Finance Facility is now becoming clearer.

With FP7 started, the European Commissioner for Research, Janez Potocnik, has turned to shaping the future of the European Research Area (ERA). A Green Paper on the ERA is planned to be tabled by the European Commission in March. This document will be discussed at the informal Competitiveness Council (Council of Ministers) meeting in Würzburg on 26-27 April and is foreseen to deal with following subjects:

- Research infrastructures;
- Coordination of national programmes;
- International cooperation and
- Research careers.

The publication of the Green Paper is to be followed by a large consultation, leading to a new Communication in 2008. With this revision, Commissioner Potocnik wants to start "a new era for the ERA".

Another interesting point this year will certainly be the political discussion around the establishment of a European Institute of Technology (EIT). The German Presidency will present its new plans for the EIT in March and an intense debate will certainly follow. It remains to be seen however, whether a decision on the future existence of an EIT will be taken under the leadership of Germany, or if this "hot potato" will be passed on to Portugal, which is to chair the Council of Ministers in the second half of the year.

Research **7th Framework Programme (FP7)**

Legal and financial issues of FP7 on the way to be clarified

On 22 December, the European Commission published as planned the first 42 calls for proposals for the 7th Framework Programme (FP7). The deadlines for submission of these calls, which cover all themes and parts of FP7, are spread between mid-April and November, with most of them falling in the last week of April and the first week of May. With the final adoption of the FP7 legislative package by the Council of Ministers on 18 December (see Synopsis Research 2006/5) and the publication of the calls four days later, nothing was standing in the way of a strong start of FP7 on 1 January 2007.

All the call texts are listed on a dedicated site on CORDIS (see link below); the Work Programmes as well as the different Guides for Applicants can also be found there. There are, however, a number of important details that have not been finalised by the Commission services yet:

- The different Model Grant Agreements and annexed forms needed for the contractual relationship between the beneficiaries and the Commission should be finalised at the beginning of March.
- The Guide to Financial Issues, detailing the financial reporting as well as the new system for the certification of costs, should be available on Cordis at the end of March.
- The Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS) is planned to be operational in the week of 19 March. Tests are currently ongoing.
- The Unique Registration Facility: There is no information yet as to when this facility will be up and running. It is to hope that its launch will be concomitant with that of the EPSS.

These implementation tools for FP7 have been held back in part because of the adaptations that were necessary for the transition from FP6 to FP7. And the Model Grant Agreement had to await the final adoption of the Rules for Participation to be drafted in detail.

The text of the different Work Programmes has just been finalised by the different FP7 Programme Committees. These committees could only be formally established after the official start of FP7 on 1 January. Following the formal opinion of the Programme Committees, the Work Programmes have been adopted by the College of Commissioners and the official text has been published in the Official Journal on 28 February and subsequently put on the Cordis website.

Once the details of the implementation of FP7 will have been fixed in the first half of this year, the procedures will be in place and the process will most likely be smoother for future calls. The implementation tools being currently set up are likely to be in place for seven years, allowing the participants to FP7 to acquire a certain routine.

The text of the calls, the Work Programmes 2007 and all relevant documents can be found under: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>

Official establishment of the European Research Council

On 22 February 2007, the European Commission officially announced the establishment of the European Research Council (ERC). A formal launch event was held in Berlin on 27 February. The ERC has been created to support frontier research by individual investigators and their teams, with excellence as the only selection criterion. It has a total budget of €7.5 billion for 2007-2013.

In addition, the Scientific Council of the ERC just released its first activity report, to be transmitted by the European Commission to the Council of Ministers and to the European Parliament. This report details the preparatory phase of the ERC, which started in July 2005 with the nomination of the 22 founding members of the ERC. Their term of office will last 4 years from the day of establishment of the ERC. The key achievements of the Scientific Council include:

- Selection of a Secretary-General and establishment of an ERC Board (see Synopsis Research 2006/4). The function of Secretary-General is currently held by Prof. Winnacker.

- Development of an overall strategy, defining two major funding streams: one dedicated for early career stage researchers (“Starting Grants”), and one for more established researchers (“Advanced Grants”).
- Finalisation of the 2007 Work Programme, which includes the first call for Starting Grants. This first call for proposal has been launched on 22 December 2006. It offers €290 million to support between 200 and 250 researchers for a period of up to 5 years. In the last version of the Work Programme, the eligibility criteria have been slightly changed, increasing the maximal time after the award of the PhD to 9 instead of 8 years (leading to a maximal total of 12 years if eligible career breaks are considered). The Scientific Council has also started its work on the call for proposals for Advanced Grants, which is planned to be issued at the end of 2007.
- Establishment of the peer-review process. The Scientific Council chose to rely on a system of 20 evaluation panels covering all disciplines and has individually selected the members of the panels, based on recommendations from research funding organisations and scientific academies. The chosen two-stage evaluation procedure is currently being worked out by the ERC Dedicated Implementation Structure. Uncertainties remain however on the number of proposals that will be received at the first stage; the current estimations foresee between 3000 and 9000 applications.

The Scientific Council also highlights in his report the items that in its view need “quick action” in the near future:

- The formal decision on the Work Programme and all subsequent implementation decision should be taken quickly. With this, the Scientific Council most likely alludes to the necessary formal decisions to be taken by the Ideas Programme Committee.
- Rapid development of the Dedicated Implementation Structure and incorporation into the ERC Executive Agency. With this call, it looks like the Scientific Council seems eager to push the ERC into independence.
- Adequate support for the activities of the Scientific Council. This last item seems rather surprising, as it sounds like the support for the work of the Scientific Council has so far been inadequate. Support staff for the Chair and Vice-Chair while located in their home institutions are specifically mentioned under this item.

Besides mentioning the ongoing development of the Advanced Grant scheme, the Scientific Council does however not lay out any further activities to be undertaken in the near future.

The ERC Scientific Council’s activity report can be found under:
http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/scc_summary-report_final.pdf

The Joint Technology Initiatives in the starting blocks

Despite the strong support for the Joint Technology Initiative (JTI) scheme under FP7 by the Council of Ministers at their meeting of December 2006, the European Commission has not yet presented any formal proposal to be adopted by Council under Art. 171 of the Treaty. This article foresees Community financial support for public-private “joint undertakings”. Detailed impact assessments and stakeholder consultations are currently ongoing to determine which of the planned JTIs are going to be proposed to the Council (see Synopsis Research 2006/5). Currently, the two leading candidates are:

- Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI): This JTI would be a joint partnership of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industry and Associations (EFPIA) and the European Commission, addressing the bottlenecks in the creation of innovative medicines. The foreseen Community contribution would amount to €1 billion over the period 2007-2013, which will fund the public and SME participants in IMI’s research programme. This amount would be matched by in-kind contributions from industry. An executive office is planned to be set up in Brussels, which will launch the calls for proposals in the fields determined in IMI’s Strategic Research Agenda, organise the selection procedure and follow the implementation of the selected projects.

The projects will be selected based on their excellence, and specific funding rules differing from the FP7 Rules of Participation are foreseen.

- ARTEMIS (JTI on embedded electronic systems): This JTI is planned to be set up as a partnership between industry, certain Member States (e.g. Finland) and the European Commission. The Community contribution is estimated at around €400 million, which will be matched by industry. A financial contribution from the involved Member States is also foreseen. The inclusion of Member States could however be double-edged. On the one side, it increases the financial resources for the JTI, on the other hand, it might create certain governance problems (i.e. independence of the JTI from national interests). These issues are currently being assessed by the European Commission. Despite this, there is strong support for ARTEMIS from DG INFSO and Media Commissioner Viviane Reding.

With these two JTIs in the starting blocks, it is now up to the European Commission to decide which of them will be the object of a proposal to the Council of Ministers. The Commission will most likely present its proposals in April, and the Competitiveness Council should discuss them in its meeting at the end of May. Proposals for Art. 171 initiatives like the JTIs follow a procedure which requires the formal opinion of the European Parliament (consultation procedure). If the Parliament's opinion can be obtained in autumn, the Council of Ministers could formally adopt the proposals at the end of the year. This would allow the first calls of the selected JTIs to be launched as early as spring 2008.

More information on the Innovative Medicines Initiative can be found under:

<http://www.imi-europe.org/>

More information on ARTEMIS can be found under:

<http://www.artemis-office.org/DotNetNuke/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>

The Risk-Sharing Finance Facility: modus operandi

A new part in FP7, the Risk-Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF) is aiming at leveraging more funds for research and development by providing bank loans for this type of activities. This "horizontal" instrument had been assessed rather critically by the European Parliament and by some of the Member States in the Council of Ministers during the final negotiations for an agreement on the FP7 proposal. As a result, the foreseen funding for the RSFF was cut in half, the first €500 million being allocated in 2007 and another €500 million to be attributed in 2010 after a review of the instrument.

With FP7 finally adopted, the European Commission recently presented the definitive modus operandi of the RSFF. The funds coming from FP7 will be matched on a 1:1 basis by the European Investment Bank (EIB), which will run the RSFF, leading to a total budget of €2 billion over the time of FP7. This money will not be used to fund research and development, it will rather be used to cover the additional risk the EIB will take when giving loans to "sub-investment grade" companies and institutions. Such loans, in the range of €20'000 to several tens of million Euros, will be used by companies or institutions to undertake risky R&D projects or to build expensive research infrastructures.

The RSFF will be open to all participants from Member States and Associated Countries. The EIB will negotiate with the local banks to set up a network of intermediaries in charge of handling smaller size loans. If the requested loan is higher than €7.5 million, the application can be handled directly by the EIB; for loans in the range of €20'000 to €12.5 million, the intermediaries will process the request. The loan will always be given to a single legal entity (company, institution), not to a project consortium.

The major part (80%) of the funds from FP7 going into the RSFF will come from the Infrastructures budget within the Capacities Programme, the remainder coming from the Cooperation Programme. Therefore, to be eligible, an R&D project will have to fall into one of the ten Themes of Cooperation. In addition, loans for research infrastructures will be available as well as loans for projects of the SME-specific actions, despite the fact that no funding will come from this part of FP7. Other eligibility criteria also apply, but will be identical to the ones for FP7 projects (e.g. ethics). As a

result, a participant in a selected FP7 project of one of the types mentioned above is automatically eligible for a loan by the RSFF.

The RSFF will not only grant loans for R&D projects, but also for commercial innovation activities. These will however be solely covered by the contribution of the EIB, to avoid the cross-financing of innovation activities through FP7. For the client of the RSFF, there will be no visible difference between the two parts, and all research, development and innovation projects can be granted a loan.

More information on the RSFF can be found under:

<http://www.eib.org/site/index.asp?designation=rsff>

EU Research Policy

Scientific publishing in the European Research Area

On 15-16 February, a well-attended conference on the future of scientific publishing took place in Brussels. Around 500 participants from many European countries, as well as from America and Asia discussed the implications of the new communication technologies like the internet on the system of publication and dissemination of scientific information amongst the scientific community and the public.

Raising prices of scientific journal subscriptions weigh heavily on the budget of university libraries and led to a questioning of the current publication practice. A study of a group of experts published last year by the European Commission examined the scientific publishing system (see Synopsis Research 2006/4 for a summary of the study). In December 2006, both the European Research Advisory Board (EURAB) and the Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC), called for the obligatory deposition of scientific papers in an open-access repository within 6 month after publication. In their view, this measure should first be implemented in a test phase for research supported by the ERC.

Based on a broad consultation following the study of the expert group, the European Commission published a Communication on this subject on 14 February. The main actions the European Commission is planning to undertake are:

- The costs of publishing will be reimbursed in EU-funded research projects and specific guidelines will be issued within specific programmes (like the ERC) on the deposition of articles in open repositories.
- €50 million in funds will be available in 2007-2008 for work on digital repositories, and €25 million for digital preservation tools (within FP7). The *eContentplus* programme will make €10 million available for access and use of scientific information.
- A study on the economic aspects of digital preservation and research on publication business models as well as on the scientific publication system will be funded.

With these measures, the European Commission hopes that the dissemination of scientific information will be improved and that in addition, the long-term storage of such information will be secured.

The Communication of the European Commission can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/digital_libraries/doc/scientific_information/communication_en.pdf

Assessment of the ERA-NET scheme in FP6

On 15 January, the European Commission published the 2006 report of the ERA-NET expert review group led by Manfred Horvat. In this report, the group of experts strikes an overall positive balance of the ERA-NET scheme under FP6. In their views, this instrument responds to a real need and should be continuously adapted. In the report, the experts present a series of recommendations that should help to enhance the efficacy of ERA-NET as a mean to attain a common European Research Area:

- A High-Level Group at the level of the Council of Ministers should assist the authorities of the Member States in developing national strategies in regard to ERA-NET.
- The European Commission should give the instrument a “brand name”, which should help to increase the visibility of ERA-NET within the research community. As a part of this measure, a common website for all ERA-NETs should be set up.
- The participants within ERA-NETs should be encouraged to broaden the scope of their common activities, to include among others, common doctoral training programmes or research infrastructures.
- The programme owners and managers at national level should put together a strategic overview of the participation of their country in ERA-NETs and should transmit their opinion on possible ERA-NET participations to their Programme Committee delegate based on this overview.

Despite the positive conclusion the report is drawing on ERA-NET, it states that the success of the scheme will only be really measurable with the response of the scientific community to the joint calls, which represent the final achievement of this instrument. In addition, these calls have to lead to research of high quality and impact in order to make the success of ERA-NET complete.

The ERA-NET review 2006 can be found under:

ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/coordination/docs/era_net_review_report_dec2006_en.pdf

Publications

International cooperation under FP7

On 12 January, the European Commission published its new strategy for international cooperation under FP7. This staff working document puts together in one document all the possibilities for cooperation with third countries that had already been laid out in the Specific Programmes as well as in the different Work Programmes (see Synopsis Research 2006/4 for a summary). Not mentioned in this strategy are the possibilities for international cooperation in the framework of the COST programme.

In addition, the European Commission has launched a website entirely dedicated to international cooperation in Science and Technology (S&T). This useful site contains the links to all the relevant documents, for example an actualised list of the countries with S&T agreements with the EU and a list of the International Cooperation Partner Countries (ICPC, formerly known as INCO).

The international cooperation strategy can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/pdf/newapproach_en.pdf

The new international cooperation website can be found under:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm>

Energy research

A brochure giving an overview on the possibilities under the Energy Theme of FP7 has been published by the European Commission. This brochure details the different activities under this Theme and shortly explains the different funding schemes and possibilities for participation.

There is also a one-page explanation about the research programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS). As Switzerland is not associated to this Fund, Swiss researchers can only participate at their own costs to this research programme.

The brochure on energy research can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/energy/nn/nn_pu/article_1078_en.htm#energy_2007

Communicating European Research 2005

On 19 January, the European Commission has published a book that presents the results of the conference “Communicating European Research” that was held on 14-15 November 2005. The

book contains a series of 40 articles on science communication that draw on the workshops, lectures and events that took place at the widely attended conference. This book will certainly be a valuable tool for science communication professionals as well as for people involved in the dissemination of research results.

This book can be ordered from Springer publishing:

Communicating European Research 2005, Michel Claessens (edit.), ISBN 1-4020-5357-6, January 2007, Springer Verlag.

Innovation

Will the German Presidency be the new motor of the EIT project?

Back in October 2006, the Commission had proposed to establish a European Institute of Technology (EIT) composed of different “Knowledge and Innovation Communities” (KICs) and of a Governing Board (see Synopsis Research 2006/4). With Germany taking over the Presidency of the Council of Ministers from Finland on 1 January, the discussions around the European Commission’s proposal to set up an EIT seemed to have gained some momentum.

So far, the Council of Minister’s ad-hoc working group on the EIT has proceeded in questioning the Commission officials on a series of open points that had been listed by the German Presidency. In addition, some Member States’ representatives have made alternative proposals on how the EIT could be set up and what its competences would be. As a result, the Presidency has been working out a compromise which is based on a two-stage process for the establishment of the EIT:

Stage 1 (until June 2008):

- A “decision of principle to set up an EIT should be taken by the end of 2007”, based on an amended Commission proposal.
- A Governing Board would be established, with the task of “devising a coherent and clearly defined approach to the EIT until the middle of 2008”.
- For this, the Governing Board could recruit a limited number of staff and prepare the launch of an initial KIC.
- By mid-2008, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament will be “given the opportunity to decide on the approach put forward by the Governing Board”. The final adoption would take place in autumn 2008.

Stage 2 (from June 2008 onwards):

- Following the Council’s and the Parliament’s consent, the European Commission would be entitled to move ahead with the definitive establishment of the EIT.
- The Governing Board would subsequently be able to take a decision on the funding of the “pilot KIC”.
- Council and Parliament would nevertheless still be allowed to influence the strategic orientation of the EIT.
- During the second stage, setting up an EIT foundation should be considered.

This proposal of the German Presidency will be discussed in the working group meeting on 12 March. Before that, two further meetings are foreseen to consult stakeholders from academia and industry. In addition, a Competitiveness Council (Council of Ministers) meeting dedicated entirely to the EIT is foreseen at the end of June. This extra meeting, which is not included in the official planning of the Council of Ministers, should allow the Ministers to come to a “decision of principle” before the summer break.

Innovation Scoreboard 2006 published

On 22 February, the European Commission published the 2006 edition of the European Innovation Scoreboard. This comparative analysis of Europe's innovation performance shows that, for the fourth consecutive year, the innovation gap between the US and the EU has decreased. The Nordic countries and Switzerland continue to be the innovation leaders worldwide, while many of the new Member States are catching up with the EU average.

The European Innovation Scoreboard measures the innovation performance of a country's economy. The Scoreboard is based on indicators that are grouped in five categories covering different key dimensions of innovation:

- Innovation drivers: structural conditions required for innovation;
- Knowledge creation: investments in R&D activities;
- Innovation and entrepreneurship: efforts towards innovation at firm level;
- Application: performance expressed in terms of labour and business activities and their added value in innovative sectors;
- Intellectual property: achieved results in terms of successful and codified know-how.

The European Innovation Scoreboard 2006 uses the most recent data available for each category (data from 2005 in most cases).

The European Innovation Scoreboard can be found under:

http://www.proinno-europe.eu/doc/EIS2006_final.pdf

Education

First call for proposals for the Life Long Learning (LLL)

The new Life Long Learning Programme supports learning opportunities from childhood to old age in every single life situation. It is the successor to the current Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and eLearning programmes and has a budget of € 7 billions for the period 2007-2013.

The Decision establishing the new programme came into force on 14 December 2006 (see Synopsis Education 2006/3). The Commission has published on 20 December 2006 the Call for Proposals 2007 for applications for grants under the programme. Grants and subsidies will be awarded to projects and activities that foster interchange, promote bilateral and multilateral partnerships, foster trans-national mobility of individuals and promote quality in education and training systems throughout Europe. The association of Switzerland to the LLL Programme is foreseen for 2008 and onwards.

The Lifelong Learning Programme comprises four sectoral programmes: school education (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci) and adult education (Grundtvig), completed by a transversal programme focusing on policy cooperation, languages, information and communication technology and dissemination and exploitation of results. Finally, the Jean Monnet programme focuses on European integration and support for certain key institutions and associations active in the field.

The main deadlines for the applications are set between February, 28 and April 30, 2007.

More information on the different calls of proposals can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index_en.html

Erasmus Mundus: new cooperation window

Erasmus Mundus "External Cooperation Window" is a European cooperation scheme designed to foster co-operation in the field of higher education between the European Union and Third countries through individual mobility of students and academic staff.

A new call for proposals has been launched by the Commission to fund higher education student and teaching staff mobility activities between European universities and universities from targeted third-countries (24 countries in total distributed in 9 geographical lots). The programme is open for participation to Swiss institutions under certain conditions.

The overall budget amounts to €36.4 million for projects selected in 2007. The grants awarded to individual projects will fall between €1 and €6 million depending on the geographical lot concerned.

Detailed information about Erasmus Mundus can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

Results of the Meeting of the Education, Youth and Culture Council

The Education, Youth and Culture Council (Council of Ministers) met on 16 February 2007. The Ministers adopted a set of key messages in the field of education and vocational training, on one hand, and of youth policy, on the other, intended as a contribution to the European Council of 8-9 March. The Ministers want to emphasise the important role played by education policy in order to achieve the goals of the Lisbon Strategy.

The Council held an exchange of views on the future of the "Education and Training 2010" work programme to mark the start of a reflection process concerning a future strategic framework for the European Union's action in these fields, such as expanding early childhood education, strengthen lifelong learning strategies and continuing modernising higher education.

Following the progress made in implementing the European Pact for Youth in 2006, the Council agreed on a further implementation of the Pact, which confirms the importance of integrating young people into society and working life and of making better use of their potential.

The press release of the Education Council can be found under:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/92819.pdf

Anniversary: Erasmus turns 20 in 2007

The EU's Erasmus Programme for student and teacher mobility is turning 20 in 2007. Over a million students have taken part in this rewarding and challenging experience since it began in 1987. Celebrations will run throughout 2007 with a number of special events. From 2007 until 2013, Erasmus will run under the new Lifelong Learning Programme.

General information on Erasmus:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/what_en.html

SwissCore Küche

New Head of Office for SwissCore

From beginning of February 2007, Maryline Maillard is the new SwissCore Head of Office, replacing Danièle Rod Wiesner. After studying economical history at the University of Lausanne, she spent few months in North-Germany within the Leonardo Programme. Back in Switzerland, she published her master thesis on the first milk powder company and organised an exhibition on the same topic. Afterwards she worked for the federal programme Swiss Virtual Campus, which promotes e-learning education by the Swiss universities. During the last two years, she managed the project Ranking swissUp among the Swiss universities. She is looking forward to meeting you soon.