

SwissCore Synopsis

November-December 2007

2007 / 9

♦ Seen from Brussels

- The “Christmas gifts” of the Portuguese Presidency 2

♦ Research

7th Framework Programme – FP7

- Council’s blessing for the Joint Technology Initiatives 2
- Uncertain future for the Networks of Excellence 3

EU Research Policy

- The Council’s take on the revision of the European Research Area 4
- Access to scientific information: the Council lays out a road map 5

Publications

- Europe in the global research landscape 5
- Marie Curie website updated for FP7 6
- Sustainable development: new website and new unit 6
- Self-help information resource for FP7 6
- Revival of the magazine on European industrial research 6

♦ Innovation

- Council conclusions on European Institute of Innovation and Technology 6
- A lead market strategy as an important element of the EU Innovation policy 7
- Council’s exchange of view on future patent litigation system in Europe 8

Publications

- 10th edition of the European Competitiveness Report 8
- The industrial research and innovation website of the EC’s Joint Research Centre 8

♦ Education

- New Council resolution on modernising universities and competitiveness 9
- The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning launched 9
- Other results of the Education Council of 15-16 November 2007 10

♦ SwissCore Küche

- New SwissCore Trainee: Bettina Zwiller 11
- SwissCore networking in Brussels: 14th SwissCore apéro 11
- SwissCore Seminar 2007 on the implementation of FP7 and of the CIP 11

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

♦ Seen from Brussels

The “Christmas gifts” of the Portuguese Presidency

Right in time before Christmas, in a marathon of Council Working Party and COREPER meetings, the Portuguese Presidency of the EU has managed to secure agreements between the EU Ministers on a whole range of initiatives that were still pending.

First and foremost, a general approach was reached by the Research Ministers on the first four Joint Technology Initiatives, whose details had been fiercely debated up to the last Competitiveness Council of the year (see below). Despite the consensus that was finally attained, these initiatives will now have to demonstrate that they are able to deliver on the promises made.

An agreement was also found with the European Parliament regarding the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (which could now be shortened as EI²T); despite having to go through a second reading, the proposal of the European Commission is factually adopted. The upcoming second examination of this new “flagship initiative” by Parliament and Council will most likely be only procedural and should not lead to any substantial change (see p. 6). The Council also analysed the case of the access to scientific information and delivered an entire road map for this topic; it also presented its views on the revised European Research Area (see p. 4).

In the field of education, both the Education and the Competitiveness Council looked at the modernisation of universities (see p. 9) and a whole range of other initiatives were discussed by the Education Ministers (see p. 10).

But the EU Presidency was not the only one to distribute gifts: the European Commission issued 32 calls on 30 November; another call for ICT followed a few days later. The researchers answering to these calls will however need to be patient: the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS) closed down on the day the calls were issued, due to the physical move of the server. The system should be again up and running in the first week of January.

Yet to come are the final results of the first call of the European Research Council for the Starting Grants; the individual applicants are currently being informed about the results. For the successful ones amongst them, it will surely be a merry Christmas.

♦ Research

7th Framework Programme (FP7)

Council’s blessing for the Joint Technology Initiatives

At the Competitiveness Council meeting of 22-23 November, the Council of the European Union reached an agreement (“general approach”) on the four first Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI): ARTEMIS (embedded computing systems), IMI (innovative medicines), ENIAC (nano-electronics) and Clean Sky (sustainable air transport) (see Synopsis 2007/4 and 2007/5). As a reminder, JTIs are Joint Undertakings (public-private partnerships) set up between the European Community and industry associations, based on Art. 171 of the EU Treaty, with the aim of supporting research efforts in areas which are crucial for European industry. A Strategic Research Agenda, compiled by industry after consultation of all stakeholders, serves as the research programme on the basis of which calls for proposals will be launched by each JTI. Despite this similarity in the legal basis, the differences between the first four JTIs are quite substantial (see Synopsis 2007/6), leading to intense discussions in Council, especially on the following issues:

- Legal status of the Joint Undertakings: After some debate, the Research Ministers agreed that the JTIs will be set up as Community Bodies on the basis of Art. 171, and not as international organisations. This implies that the Protocol of Immunities and the Staff Regulations of the European Community will also apply to the staff of the JTIs.

- Duration of the JTIs: The duration of the JTIs will in any case be limited to 10 years. This position was also strongly advocated by the ITRE Committee of the European Parliament.
- Rights of Third Parties and supervision by the Member States: After an extended argument between the legal services of the Council and of the Commission, the ministers agreed that the JTIs would be set up as real public-private partnerships, with shared responsibility of industry in the management of the Joint Undertaking. As a compensation for their reduced oversight possibilities (as the usual comitology procedure does not apply to the JTIs), the Member States will place a Council observer in the Governing Boards of the different Joint Undertakings. The Commission decided to voice their opposition to this new rule by adding a protocol declaration to the agreement.
- Intellectual Property Rules (IPR): The Council fought hard to enforce the same basic principles for the IPR in all four JTIs, namely the ones applying to FP7.

In addition to these general points of discussion, some issues concerned individual JTIs:

- Voting rights and national funding in ARTEMIS/ENIAC: As these two JTIs combine not only funds from FP7 and from industry, but also from individual Member States, the application of national rules for the awarding of this part of the budget was strongly debated. The resulting compromise is a rather complicated procedure, in which the Member States check the outcome of the common evaluation procedure and might be able to exclude certain partners. Moreover, the voting rights of the participating Member States in the Governing Board will be weighted according to their financial contribution in the Joint Undertaking.
- Funding rules in Clean Sky: In Clean Sky, only 25% of the Community funds will be awarded based on competitive calls for proposal, the rest being distributed amongst named beneficiaries. This peculiarity did not please a number of Member States, as it is not in line with the rules of FP7, from which these funds are derived. This mechanism was finally accepted on the basis that it represents a special case tailored for the aeronautics industry. A protocol declaration was added to prevent this case from becoming precedence.

On 11 December, the European Parliament (EP) has delivered its opinion on the JTIs, as required by the consultation procedure in place for Art. 171. After the general agreement in Council and the tabled opinion of Parliament, the JTIs should be formally adopted by the Council of the European Union at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting of 18-20 December, allowing the start of the first four JTIs in January 2008. Several launch events are already planned in the first two months of 2008, and the topics of the first calls will be communicated in the next few weeks by some of the JTIs.

The Council's general approach on the JTI proposals can be found under:

ARTEMIS: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st15/st15017.en07.pdf>
 IMI: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st15/st15826.en07.pdf>
 ENIAC: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st15/st15823.en07.pdf>
 Clean Sky: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st15/st15825.en07.pdf>

Uncertain future for the Networks of Excellence

On 20 November, an open forum was held in Brussels on the future of "European Networks of Excellence". Networks of Excellence (NoEs) are an instrument that was created under FP6 to strengthen Europe's scientific impact in specific fields, to tackle the fragmentation of European research and to create durable networks in the area of interest.

Under FP7, albeit officially continued, NoEs have only very sparsely been called for so far and rumours have been circulating that this funding scheme would be discontinued altogether. The European Commission's caution in launching calls for new NoEs seems to echo the many problems experienced by these networks, especially after a few years of operation: whereas some suffered from an unmanageable size (e.g. NoEs with over 50 partners), others faced difficulties in attaining the contractually defined result of "durable integration". Unfortunately, regarding both the size and the durable integration of NoEs, European Commission officials have given only little guidance, or sometimes even contradictory indications.

The open forum, organised by a group of 56 NoEs, was the occasion to discuss these issues with the European Commission and to present an opinion paper stating the importance of the NoEs for European research. This paper proposes that the Commission takes the following actions:

- Reconfirm its commitment to NoEs as one of the main mechanisms to strengthen the European Research Area;
- Carry out a more comprehensive review of NoEs and their impact;
- Via a competitive process, provide additional funding to existing NoEs to reach sustainable and durable integration.

This last point is especially important in the light of the difficulties that NoEs have experienced when trying to set up a dedicated legal entity for their network. In the open forum, many coordinators of NoEs complained about the missing interest from the partnering institutions in durable integration and the lack of suitable models for such integration.

Regarding this issue, the European Commission stressed that the integration of the institutions, rather than of the scientists, is a key for the success of the NoEs, but that the institutional support for durable NoEs has so far been lacking. The Commission is currently evaluating the NoE scheme via different channels (external evaluation, annual expert reviews, thematic impact assessments, cross-cutting analysis) and results are expected in the second half of 2008. In addition, Commissioner Potocnik has set up a group of “wise persons” to answer four key questions on the future of NoEs:

1. Are the existing NoEs developing in the way that was intended when the instrument was created?
2. Could there be a new role for NoEs in the revised European Research Area?
3. Does the NoE funding scheme need to be readjusted at this stage?
4. Should a different instrument be created for the renewal of successful projects?

The answers to these questions should have an influence on the role of NoEs in the forthcoming Work Programmes of FP7 and feed into the revision of the whole Framework Programme starting in 2009. While the Commission is analysing the situation, the running NoEs are left to their own devices to find the necessary institutional support and financial means to achieve a durable integration.

The opinion paper from the NoEs can be found under: <http://www.supportresearchnoes.eu>

EU Research Policy

The Council’s take on the revision of the European Research Area

At the Competitiveness Council of 22-23 November, the Research Ministers of the EU discussed the European Commission’s proposal to invigorate the European Research Area (ERA), published this spring in the form of a Green Paper (see Synopsis 2007/2). This document was followed by a large stakeholder consultation and an institutional debate. The reflection process on the ERA culminated in a high-level conference in Lisbon on 8-10 October (see Synopsis 2007/8). Under the title “The future of science and technology in Europe”, the Council adopted a series of conclusions based on the results of this conference, oriented around three main axes:

- Ensure sufficient human resources for R&D: under this point, the Council recommends a balanced brain circulation between the EU and the US, a positive growth rate of science and technology graduates and an appropriate balance of R&D personnel inflow to the EU. The Commission is invited to consolidate its monitoring activities in S&T human resources.
- Reinforce competitive incentives and market conditions for business research and innovation: these recommendations aim mostly at an efficient knowledge transfer and increased participation of industry in public R&D programmes.

- Optimise the use of public resources for R&D programmes, infrastructures and international cooperation: here, the accent is set on the voluntary cooperation between Research Councils and national funding agencies to develop joint objectives, exchange information and learn from each other. This cooperation should be particularly stressed in the case of research infrastructures and international cooperation.

Full of good intentions, these conclusions nevertheless represent a watered-down version of the suggestions made by the Commission in its Green Paper. The latter has been partially criticised for its lack of substance and the Council's take on these ideas has not given them more of an edge.

The Council's conclusions can be found under:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/97225.pdf

Access to scientific information: the Council lays out a road map

At the Competitiveness Council meeting of 22-23 November, the Research Ministers of the EU examined the current debate on the access to scientific publication, a topic the European Commission had addressed in a Communication tabled in February (see Synopsis 2007/1). Concomitant with the Communication, a conference bringing together the different stakeholders (scientists, research council officials, librarians and publishers) shed light on the difficulties faced by libraries with the raising costs of scientific publications. The discussion focussed on novel models to ensure wide access to scientific information supported by public funds, the so-called "open access" models.

The EU Member States devised a road map of measures with deadlines in order to guarantee such an open access while taking into consideration the publishers' commercial interests. The Council clearly favours the "delayed open access" model, in which all scientific publications should be available after an embargo period. This would allow the publishers to get a financial return by selling the access during the embargo. The EU Ministers encourage the Commission to experiment with open access to scientific data and publications resulting from EU-funded projects.

In addition, possibilities of "demand aggregation" should also be explored and the coordination between Member States, large research institutions and funding bodies should be enhanced. Another proposed measure concerns the reimbursement of the Value-Added Tax (VAT) on publications to the libraries. Besides the access aspect of scientific information, proposals to ensure proper preservation of such information are also supported by the Council.

The Council's road map for the access to scientific information can be found under:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/97225.pdf

Publications

Europe in the global research landscape

A new economic analysis, "Europe in the global research landscape", was published by the Unit "Economic and prospective analysis" (newly C3) of DG Research's Directorate C, which is responsible for the supervision of the European Research Area from the perspective of the knowledge-based economy. This publication nicely collates all the relevant economic data regarding research policy in Europe, e.g. R&D expenditure, performance and human resource indicators. A second chapter analyses the societal technology demands and the ability of Europe to face them. The final chapter is focussing on the internationalisation of research performed by multinational firms and its impact on the EU research landscape. This publication will certainly be an invaluable source of information for science policymakers as well as for state and research council officials.

The publication "Europe in the global research landscape" can be downloaded under:

ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/foresight/docs/prospective-report2007_en_12_web.pdf

Marie Curie website updated for FP7

The European Commission has recently updated the website for the Marie Curie Actions of the FP7 People Programme. Under a new look, much of the information that was previously available can be found on the site. The FAQ section will certainly be useful for Marie Curie fellows and administrators alike, while the job vacancies might help many a scientist looking for a new position. Like on the old FP6 site, a link to the European Researcher's Mobility Portal is also provided.

The updated website for the Marie Curie Actions can be found here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/mariecurieactions>

Sustainable development: new website and new unit

To deal with the overarching goal of sustainable development, DG Research of the European Commission has created a new unit responsible for this theme. Led by Nicole Dewandre, this unit has the task to map the challenges of sustainable development on the 10 Themes of the Cooperation Programme of FP7. A new website has recently been set up, where all the relevant documents detailing the strategies and activities can be found. This website is a good source of background information on the subject of sustainable development.

The website's address is: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/sd>

Self-help information resource for FP7

On 19 November, EARTO, the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations, has launched a new web-based exchange forum for the FP7 user community. Despite a declared broad scope, this site so far focuses mainly on legal and financial issues related to FP7 participation. For coordinators and administrators dealing with such issues, this website will provide some helpful insights. As it is based on a "bottom-up" principle similar to Wikipedia, the information it contains must be taken with a grain of salt, as it might reflect individual views and experiences rather than an official position from the European Commission.

This self-help information resource can be found under: <http://www.meeusfp7.eu>

Revival of the magazine on European industrial research

After one and a half years in oblivion, the magazine for European Industrial Research has been recently revived by the European Commission. Its October issue examines the transition from FP6 to FP7 from the point of view of the Theme "Nanotechnologies, Materials and New production Technologies (NMP)" and addresses the challenge faced by industrial research in the global economy. This magazine provides useful information on ongoing NMP projects and on other news in this field.

The European Industrial Research magazine can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial_technologies/lists/magazine_en.html

Innovation

Council conclusions on European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

Like the Galileo satellite system, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is another flagship project of the European Commission, championed by the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso. During the past months, the EIT as well as Galileo suffered from incertitude when it came to its financing. Finally, EU Member States agreed on an extra funding of about €309 million from various budgetary chapters so that the new body can likely start working in 2008.

Concerning the governance of the EIT, EU research ministers agreed that the institute should have a Governing Board, a director and an executive committee. It was repeated that the EIT should not be seen as a fully new institute, but rather as a network, pooling together resources that already exist within Europe's most excellent universities and research institutions. The Council confirmed that the research should be focused in a first time on renewable energy, climate change and information technology, topics which will be handled in the so-called Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs).

KICs are consortia of European companies, universities and research institutions which are considered as leaders in the concerned area. According to the agreement reached at the Competitiveness Council, the EIT would start with three KICs. More KICs might be defined in a seven-year work plan, called "Strategic Innovation Agenda" (SIA), which shall be drawn up by the EITs Governing Board by June 2011 and adopted by Parliament and Council. To establish a KIC, a minimum of three partners will be required, from at least two EU Member States and all of them legally independent of each other. Among the members of a KIC, there needs to be at least one university and one company.

Till 2013, part of the activities of the three KICs will be financed with about €265 million out of the EIT's budget of around €308 million. Other sources of finance will be the 7th Framework Programme for Research and the EU Structural Funds. As the KICs are supposed to focus on "cutting-edge and innovation-driven research" which is close to market and of high economic interest, it is hoped that Europe's leading companies will make substantial financial contributions. In short, the Competitiveness Council arranged the establishment of the EIT in 2008 and it is now the European Parliaments turn to make the next step possible to put that idea into practice.

The text of the political agreement on the EIT can be found here:

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14699.en07.pdf>

A lead market strategy as an important element of the EU Innovation policy

The Communication on Innovation "Putting knowledge into practice: A broad-based innovation strategy for Europe" has been adopted on 13 September 2006. One element of this industry-led and society-driven innovation strategy of the EU is a Lead Market Initiative (LMI). The European Commission (EC) plans to adopt a document on that issue at the end of 2007. Some details which could form the future Lead Market Initiative are nevertheless already known.

The basic idea of the LMI is to identify promising emerging markets for innovative European products or services, which are supposed to have the capability to become leaders on markets outside Europe at a later stage. The LMI should establish favourable conditions for European technologies and services in order to prepare them for their later role as world market leaders. Different policy instruments such as legislation, public procurement, standardisation, labelling and certification are foreseen to help construct lead markets.

Following a broad consultation of stakeholders – namely within the more than 30 European Technology Platforms and the Europa INNOVA Panels – the EC established a set of criteria in order to define future lead markets. Six markets have been identified by the stakeholders as possible future lead markets:

- eHealth
- protective textiles (using novel fibres, nanoparticles or integrating micro-electronic components into fabrics and garments)
- sustainable construction
- recycling
- bio-based products
- renewable energies

Seen those markets, it is obvious that public authorities plays a major role in their creation or their enlargement, but private sector's investments should follow, especially in those areas where the EC regards their contribution as essential.

The base for the consultation was the Commission staff working document “Towards a European strategy in support of innovation in services”:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/af/document.cfm?action=display&doc_id=537

Council’s exchange of view on future patent litigation system in Europe

Following a Communication of the European Commission on enhancing the patent system in Europe from 3 April (see Synopsis 2007/3), the Competitiveness Council tabled the topic again at its last meeting on 22/23 November. The Council held an exchange of views, based on a progress report which has been elaborated by the Portuguese Presidency. That working document could form the basis of a future European litigation system and stipulates the following points:

- A Europe-wide patent litigation system should be based on a jurisdiction exclusively dealing with validity, infringement and inter-related proceedings concerning European patents and future Community patents. It should be a Community jurisdiction specialised in patent litigation.
- The litigation system should be operational in all Member States; the involvement of Third countries like Switzerland is not mentioned in the working paper.
- There would be a first instance with local and regional divisions as well as one central division, a second instance and a Registry. All divisions would be under the umbrella of a unified Community jurisdiction with uniform procedures. The divisions would be linked to the European Court of Justice.

The Competitiveness Council agreed on the necessity to go ahead with the reconstruction of the European patent system at a faster rate. Therefore it was decided to move to the next stage, which is to launch technical discussions on certain points, including the Community patent, but without fixing a concrete deadline. Discordance exists between Member States when it comes to the question whether the creation of a European patent litigation system and the Community patent should be part of one single package, or should it be dealt with separately. Whereas Germany is in favour of the first solution, France prefers the latter.

Working document of the Portuguese Presidency on Intellectual Property from 30 October 2007:

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14492.en07.pdf>

Publications

10th edition of the European Competitiveness Report

The newest edition of the European Competitiveness Report has been released on the 31 October. The report stresses the importance of investments in research and development in order to increase productivity. The authors notice for Europe a GDP growth of 3% in 2006 and consider that an increase in productivity, together with the employment growth, is the key driver of that raise. According to the report, the strongest growth could be found in industries in which Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) play an important role. The report also states that most new EU Member States as well as countries with a lower GDP per capita are catching up in terms of productivity and economic growth.

The European Competitiveness Report can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/competitiveness/doc/compet_report_2007/compreg_2007_sec_1444.pdf

Some key messages from the report can be found in following Commission Communication:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/competitiveness/doc/compet_report_2007/compreg_2007_com_666.pdf

The industrial research and innovation website of the EC’s Joint Research Centre

The industrial research and innovation website of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) provides information and studies for policy makers, which are gathered by the JRC’s Institute of Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS), mostly in collaboration with DG Research. The focus

is not set on public but on private investments in research and innovation. Private funding of R&D are considered as highly important by the European Commission's Action Plan to raise Europe's R&D spending to 3% of the GDP (of which two-thirds should be from the private sector). Particular attention is given to the new EU Member States. The website aims to be a platform for the long-term collection, monitoring, analysis and reporting of information on industrial research and innovation within the EU.

Probably the most well-known study which can be found on the website is the EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard (presented in Synopsis 8/2007).

Link to the website: <http://iri.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

➤ **Education**

New Council resolution on modernising universities and competitiveness

On 15 and 23 November respectively, both the Education and the Competitiveness Councils adopted a new resolution on "Modernising universities for Europe's competitiveness in global knowledge economy". The text addresses issues around autonomy, governance, curricula and mobility, but does not raise anything surprising or new. The resolution emphasizes once again that modernising higher education and research are key elements for European competitiveness. It invites the European Commission (EC) to support the Member States with regard to the modernisation agenda, in particular to:

- identify obstacles that EU higher education institutions face in their modernisation efforts;
- facilitate mutual learning and increase cooperation between universities and the private sector;
- address obstacles to the mobility of students, teachers, and researchers;
- study the social background of students participating in Erasmus as well as the effect Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus have on modernisation and on international attractiveness.

It is expected that the EC will report back on these issues by mid-2008.

As a reiteration of the previous Council commitment in March 2007 that highlighted education, research and innovation as pillars of the Lisbon Strategy, the new resolution echoes the following past Communications of the EC:

- "The role of universities in a Europe of knowledge" (February 2003);
- "Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling European universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy" (April 2005);
- "Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: Education, Research and Innovation" (May 2006).

The resolution can be found under the following link:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/97237.pdf

The European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning launched

On 26 October, the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel, officially launched the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF-LLL). The European Parliament on 27 September and the Ministers of the Education Council on 15 November reached a political agreement on the European Commission's recommendation, which was proposed in September 2006. The EQF-LLL is expected to be formally adopted in early 2008.

The principal aim of the EQF-LLL is to act as a translation device between the Member States' qualifications systems, through eight reference levels, covering the span from basic to the highest level qualifications. This will help employers and educational establishments across Europe to compare and better understand the qualifications presented by individual candidates. It has two principal purposes:

- to promote mobility between countries;
- to facilitate lifelong learning.

The recommendation foresees that Member States relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF by 2010 and that individual certificates or diplomas should bear an EQF reference by 2012.

In 2005, in the framework of the Bologna process, European education ministers already adopted a European Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area and committed themselves to start developing national qualifications frameworks (NQF) for higher education by 2007. As reported by the European University Association (EUA), the subsequent initiative of the European Commission to develop the EQF for LLL in parallel has caused some confusion and should be well aligned, so that European governments would take both frameworks into account when developing their single national frameworks.

The EQF-LLL text, adopted by the European Parliament, is available under: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0463+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

Other results of the Education Council of 15-16 November 2007

In addition to the resolution on Modernising Universities and the European Qualifications Framework (see articles above), the Ministers of the Education, Youth Affairs and Culture Council also agreed on:

- Erasmus Mundus: A general orientation on the second edition of the programme (2009-2013) has been released. The new features are mainly: the inclusions of studies at doctorate level; the inclusion of partnerships with institutions from third countries funded by the budget of other Community development programmes and the simplification of administrative procedures (see details in Synopsis 2007/6).

The Council also adopted:

- a resolution on Education and Training as a key driver in the Lisbon Strategy: It focuses on the role that education and training have to play within the Lisbon strategy, notably the role of education in the knowledge triangle, the links between education, training and other Lisbon policies, as well as the effective use of peer learning and the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).
- a resolution entitled "New skills for new jobs": This resolution emphasises the importance of anticipating skills' needs and providing opportunities for citizens to improve their skill levels to match these needs.
- the conclusions on improving the quality of teacher education: These conclusions are intended as a response to the European Commission Communication published in August 2007 inviting the Member States to devote more effort to improving their teacher education systems (see details in Synopsis 2007/7).

Finally, the Council debated on:

- a more multilingual Europe: Most Ministers welcomed the focus on multilingualism, stressing the important social and economic role it has to play within the EU.
- the social dimension of Erasmus in order to promote the mobility of students, in particular those from less favourable socio-economic backgrounds.

The agenda of the Education, Youth Affairs and Culture Council can be found under:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/460&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN>

The definitive versions of the documents discussed at the Council meeting can be found under:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/docCenter.asp?lang=en&cmsid=245>

New SwissCore trainee: Bettina Zwiller

My name is Bettina Zwiller and I am the new trainee at SwissCore. I have joined the team on 4 December and will stay for six months, until the end of May. I decided to suspend my studies in Political Science, Business and Constitutional Law at the University in Zurich to do this traineeship and gain work and life experience abroad. After graduating I would prefer to work in an international environment. When I am not working or studying I am very enthusiastic about sports. I love snowboarding, running, and inline skating. Since I am born and still live in Basel, I am also a very active member of a local drums and pipes group. I enjoy travelling and getting to know other people and cultures.



Swiss networking in Brussels: 14th SwissCore apéro

For its traditional networking apéro, SwissCore welcomed on 6 November 2007 around 20 newly arrived and more established Swiss expats working in Brussels for European institutions, lobby organisations or the media. SwissCore and the Swiss Mission to the EU presented their activities to reinforce the presence and the visibility of Switzerland in Brussels in the field of research, innovation and education. As usual, this was the opportunity to network with Swiss actors in Brussels, but also to give those who are soon returning to Switzerland a flavour of how Swiss institutions can network and be active in the European capital.

SwissCore Seminar 2007 on the implementation of FP7 and of the CIP

This year, the SwissCore Seminar took place in Brussels on 22-23 November and focused on the new schemes and implementation practicalities of FP7 as well as of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme CIP. Officials from the European Commission presented the current state of FP7 and detailed its new features: the Advanced Grants of the European Research Council, the actions for coordination of national programmes (ERA-NET, ERA-NET+ and Art. 169 Initiatives), the European Technology Platforms (ETP), as well as the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI). The first day was rounded off by a discussion with Dan Andrée, Special Advisor of the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science, on the pro-active steps that could be taken in the preparation of the FP7 Work Programmes. Detailed insight was also given into the implementation practicalities and procedures of FP7 during the workshop that preceded the seminar and through different presentations on the financial and legal issues in FP7 or on the Risk-Sharing Finance Facility. As usual, the SwissCore Seminar gave the participants the opportunity to discuss and address questions directly to the experts from the Commission.



Impressions from the SwissCore Seminar 2007. Top right: Brendan Hawdon, European Commission; bottom left: Bernd Reichert, European Commission.

The whole SwissCore team wishes you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year 2008.

