

# SwissCore Synopsis

March 2008

2008 / 3

## ◆ Seen from Brussels

- The EIT flagship hoists its sails 2

## ◆ Research

### *7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme – FP7*

- Modest first waves of submissions to the ERC Advanced Grants call 2
- NEF: a new Web platform for contract negotiations 3
- Commission's follow-up initiative on researchers' careers and mobility 3
- Ambient Assisted Living and EUROSTARS advance in the adoption process 4
- This year's winners of the European Science Awards 4

### *EU Research Policy*

- The Commission's plans for a new legal framework for Research Infrastructures 5
- Australia presents its Square Kilometre Array project 6

### *Publications*

- A Work Programme of ENIAC Joint Technology Initiative 6
- First Call for Associates in the Clean Sky JTI 7
- Report on gender equality in NMP under FP6 7
- Spending for Research and Development remains stable 7

## ◆ Innovation

- Green light for the EIT 8
- 2009 to become the European Year of Creativity and Innovation? 9

### *Publications*

- Intelligent Energy Europe: Call for Proposals 2008 9

## ◆ Education

- Europe launches Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education 9
- E-Twinning: Best projects awarded at a conference in Bucharest 10

### *Publications*

- EUROPASS portal reaches 10 million visits 10
- School Autonomy in Europe – Eurydice Report discovers significant disparities 11

## ◆ SwissCore Küche

- IGLO Open hosted by SwissCore: latest developments on the EIT 11

---

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

SwissCore - Swiss Contact Office for European Research, Innovation and Education, Rue du Trône 98, B-1050 Bruxelles  
Tel +32-2-549 09 80, Fax +32-2-549 09 89, [infodesk@swisscore.org](mailto:infodesk@swisscore.org), <http://www.swisscore.org>

## ♦ Seen from Brussels

### **The EIT flagship hoists its sails**

With the decision of the European Parliament on 11 March to adopt the European Commission's European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) proposal, the "flagship" of Commission President Barroso is now able to hoist its sails and set out for its long journey expected to last at least until 2013 (p. 8). Although there are still some troubled waters to cross (the appointment of the Governing Board and the decision on the EIT's seat), the wind is currently pushing the ship carefully ahead. Indeed, supporters of this project finally see it being realised, this way galvanising them into action, while critics of the project, in the view of its adoption, will try to make the best of it by bringing in their own input. With the political avail of its co-legislators (Council and Parliament), the Commission is now able to ramp up its efforts in trying to make a shiny frigate out of this under-funded fishing boat.

While one key initiative is sailing ahead, another is experiencing somewhat of a windfall: even after the second deadline, the amount of submissions to the ERC Advanced Grants has been more than modest and certainly magnitudes below the expected number. It remains to be seen if this trend holds with the third wave of expected proposals at the end of April and if the ERC will be able to find enough excellent "frontier projects" amongst the submitted proposals (p. 2).

In addition, the Commission has not lost steam on the follow up of last year's European Research Area (ERA) Green Paper. While the members of the new ERA Board have not yet been appointed, the Commission has already made progress on a few of the initiatives planned to palliate the ailments of the ERA: a Communication on IPR is expected in April and the one on the "Researcher's passport" is currently being discussed (p. 3). The Commission also presented a first outline of the planned new legal basis for European research infrastructures, which is due to be adopted by the Council of the EU in autumn (p. 5). Furthermore, a Communication on "joint programming" and a strategy for international S&T collaboration are still in the pipeline.

On top of all this, the Commission just announced its wish to make 2009 the "Year of Creativity and Innovation" (p. 9), so we might still be in for some surprises next year, despite the then ongoing European elections...

## ♦ Research

### *7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme (FP7)*

### **Modest first waves of submissions to the ERC Advanced Grants call**

As previously announced (see Synopsis 2008/2), only a modest number of proposals have been received by the ERC for the first deadline of the Advanced Grants on 28 February. This first batch of now officially confirmed 997 submissions for the domain "physical sciences and engineering" (PE) is about 8-10 times below the expectations. And by 18 March, the closing date for the "social sciences and humanities" (SH) domain, only 403 submissions were registered.

At this stage, one can only speculate about the reasons of such low numbers: maybe the large oversubscription of last year's first ERC Starting Grant call, leading to an overall success rate of about 3%, acted as a deterrent for many advanced scientists, who are maybe not as keen to get extra funding as certain more junior investigators are. As a result of the low number of submissions, the success rate for the PE domain is expected by the ERC to climb to an impressive 10%, despite a reportedly fierce selection process. If we assume that the number of scientists funded in the three domains is equivalent (about 100 for each), then the success rate for the SH domain could even amount to an impressive 25%. However, only about 50 out of 300 funded investigators (1/6) from the Starting Grant call are in this domain. This means that the predicted success rate would still be about 13% for the SH domain in the Advanced Grants call.

We will know after the call deadline for the “life sciences” (LS) domain, on 22 April, if the submission rate remains at such an unexpectedly low level.

On 31 March, the ERC published the list of the Panel Chairs for the Advanced Grants. Surprisingly, among the 25 eminent people selected for this office, there is only a single person from France and only three from the United Kingdom, while Germany (6) and the Netherlands (4) provide over two thirds of all Chairs. Switzerland is well represented, with Prof Antonarakis from the University of Geneva and Prof. Hynes from the FMI, both in the LS domain.

The press releases on the first two call deadlines for the ERC Advanced Grants can be found under: [http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/News\\_release.pdf](http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/News_release.pdf) and [http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/News\\_release\\_AdG1\\_SH\\_270308.pdf](http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/News_release_AdG1_SH_270308.pdf)

The list of the Advanced Grants Panel Chairs can be found under: [http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/Panel\\_Chairs\\_AdG.pdf](http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/Panel_Chairs_AdG.pdf)

### **NEF: A new Web platform for contract negotiations**

With some delay relative to the signature of the first grant agreements under FP7, the European Commission’s DG Research has now widely deployed its new Negotiation Electronic Forms (NEF), a Web application currently used by the coordinator and the Project Officer at the European Commission (EC) to complete the Grant Agreement Preparation Forms (GPF).

From the user’s point of view, NEF works like this: When the EC Officer opens the negotiations for an FP7 project he creates a “negotiation session” on NEF. This will trigger a mail to be sent to the coordinator, giving him or her access to the “session”. The coordinator then enters the data in the Web form and the EC Officer checks the submitted data. If all relevant data is approved, the “session” is closed and a new “session” will be opened by the EC Officer for the next negotiation step. After completion of all the steps, negotiations can be finalised by the signing of the GPFs, which are printed directly out of NEF.

Besides NEF’s “front office” module described above, a “back office” module helps to streamline the negotiation process inside the EC. This second system should provide reminders to the Commission staff about ongoing projects and help them with the management of these projects. This streamlining has the added value that the gained knowledge about the negotiation process could be shared and errors in the process could be better identified.

DG Research plans to extend the functionalities of NEF in order to include the management of the project throughout its whole “life cycle”. It should therefore also cover both the financial and scientific reporting of the project, and be generally used for the communication between the EC Officer and the coordinator. For the moment, only the coordinator has access to NEF. The EC’s position is that the coordinator is responsible for the project; therefore he could give access to NEF to his project partners, but this should be left to his own decision. A read-only access for the regular participants might be introduced at a later stage. NEF is currently in use for all projects managed by DG Research, but the other DGs involved in FP7 might soon adopt it as well, if the system proves to be as efficient and user-friendly as it seems...

### **Commission’s follow-up initiative on researchers’ careers and mobility**

As one of the five follow-up actions of the consultation launched by the European Commission’s Green Paper on the European Research Area (ERA), the Commission will publish a Communication on Researchers’ careers and mobility, also known as „Researchers’ passport“ in June. Mid-March, a meeting with Government representatives was organised by the EC to collect their feedback on this initiative and to present the main objectives of the new communication.

The idea of the EC is to propose to the Member States (MS) and Associated Countries (AC) a “menu à la carte” of soft measures, which should improve the working and social conditions of researchers. The EC wants to speed up the creation of a true European and more attractive labour market for researchers. As partnership between the different states, the “Researchers’ passport” should help improving the situation on a national level, through exchanges of best practices and regular monitoring.

The proposed measures are mainly concerning the following four key areas:

- Open recruitment and portability of grants
- Meeting the needs for social security and supplementary pension schemes for mobile researchers
- Attractive employment and working conditions
- Enhancing training, skills and experience of researchers

The proposed measures were compiled from the EC's experiences in the last years, from the replies to the ERA Green Paper consultation and from the results of the High Level Conference organised under the Lisbon Presidency.

To open up this initiative and to put it in a broader context, DG Research collaborates with the two other Directorates-General: DG EAC (Education and Culture) and DG EMPL (Employment).

A monitoring of the progresses achieved by the MS and AC should be made by 2010-2011. If after three years not enough results have been achieved, the EC could propose mandatory actions, such as a Directive.

Information about the ERA Green paper can be found under:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/consultation-era\\_en.html#greenpaper](http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/consultation-era_en.html#greenpaper)

### **Ambient Assisted Living and EUROSTARS advance in the adoption process**

Ambient Assisted Living (AAL), a research programme undertaken by several Member States and Israel, Norway and Switzerland (see Synopsis 2008/2), will soon receive funding from the European Union. At the beginning of March, the UK also joined the programme. The European Parliament overwhelmingly adopted AAL in first reading on 13 March. The final decision by the Council of Ministers is expected at the Competitiveness Council of 29-30 May. AAL will tackle the problem of demographic change through strengthening R&D in the field of ICT. AAL will support transnational R&D projects which involve partners from at least three different countries. The EU will contribute €150 million to the budget of AAL from 2008 to 2013, but will expect the same or an even higher amount from the participating countries.

Eurostars is another research initiative which the European Union intends to support (see Synopsis 2007/7 and 2007/5). Although Eurostars has not yet been adopted, it has already launched a call. The next application submission deadline will be on 21 November. Unlike AAL, the first reading of the Eurostars proposal in the European Parliament is still pending; a decision is expected on 9 April. It is foreseen that the Council of Ministers will decide on Eurostars at the same time as for AAL, on 29-30 May. Eurostars aims to fund transnational research and development of high growing SMEs. Switzerland is among the 27 countries which already joined Eurostars. It is expected that their contribution will amount to €300 million over the six years covered by the programme.

More information on AAL and Eurostars can be found here:

<http://www.aal-europe.eu/>

<http://www.eurostars-eureka.eu/home.do>

### **This year's winners of the European Science Awards**

The European Science Awards, held on March 12, were hosted by Commissioner Janez Potocnik and Mojca Kucler Dolinar, the Slovenian Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology. The award ceremony featured three prizes, the Descartes Prize for Transnational Collaborative Research, the Prize for Science Communication and the Marie Curie Awards.

- The Descartes Prize for Transnational Collaborative Research is a prize given to transnational research teams which have achieved outstanding scientific or technological results through collaborative research. The following three research laureate teams will share € 1'360'000:
  - The VIRLIS Project has developed new strategies to combat Listeria monocytogenes, a bacterium responsible for severe food-borne infections.

- The Project SynNanoMotors is working on the realisation of some of the world's first working synthetic molecular motors and mechanical nanomachines.
- The EPICA Project is doing research in the field of Earth Science. By retrieving ice cores from the Antarctica which extend the historical climate record back 800'000 years, the group focuses on improving and understanding the mechanisms and consequences of climate change. The consortium includes 12 EU polar research teams from ten different European Countries, amongst them the group of Prof. Thomas Stocker of the University of Bern.
- The Science Communication Prize intends to help stimulating interest in science and promoting the understanding of scientific progress. The three winners in the following three categories will each receive €60'000:
  - Communicator of the year: Jean-Pierre Luminet (France) delivers understandable information about astronomy and cosmology to audiences across cultures and ages.
  - Writer of the year: Delphine Grinberg (France) is writing books that explain simple scientific concepts in an easy and entertaining way to very young children.
  - Audiovisual Documentary of the year: Peter Leonard (United Kingdom). By producing a BBC Horizon series he was able to explain complex theories about the Universe in a clear way.
- The Marie Curie Awards are given to scientists that have reached a high level of excellence in their field and who have benefited from one of the EU's Marie Curie support schemes. All six winners receive each € 50'000 and are between 36 and 41 years old. One of the winners is Dr. Valerie D'Donnell, a Life Scientist from Cardiff University UK who used to work in the laboratory of Angelo Azzi at the University of Berne.

More information about the event and the winners can be found under:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-awards/pdf/eu\\_science\\_awards2007\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-awards/pdf/eu_science_awards2007_en.pdf)

## *EU Research Policy*

### **The Commission's plans for a new legal framework for Research Infrastructures**

On 3 March, the European Commission presented the report of the European Research Area (ERA) Expert Group on research infrastructures and unveiled its plans of an EU Regulation for a new "Legal Framework for the construction and operation of new pan-European Research Infrastructures".

This planned legal basis for new European Research Infrastructures (ERI) was developed upon recommendation of the Expert Group, led by Norbert Kroo, Vice-President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Other recommendations included an increase in funding for research infrastructures, but linked with a prioritisation at European level, the further deployment of e-infrastructure as well as a strategic coordination mechanism, also in the context of Europe's participation in global research infrastructures.

The new Regulation for ERI would be based on Art.171 of the EU Treaty and would address the following points:

- The ERIs concerned by the Regulation should be of scientific, non-commercial nature and be of "pan-European" importance;
- National States, or legal entities representing them (e.g. agencies), would take part in the ERI, while it is not foreseen that the European Commission would be a member;
- The liability of the members of the ERI would be limited;
- The headquarters of the ERI should be in an EU Member State;
- The ERI should be managed by a professional management;
- Specific derogations from national law for the staff of the ERI would apply;
- The jurisdiction and applicable law would have to be specified.

The adoption procedure for this Regulation would happen in two steps: first, the general framework would be set through the adoption of the Regulation by the Council of the EU. In a second step, separate Council Decisions would be necessary for the establishment of each ERI.

The consultation process for this new legal framework is currently ongoing; it is foreseen that the European Commission will table the Regulation in July, with a foreseen adoption in Council by the end of 2008.

The report of the ERA expert group on research infrastructures can be found under: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/pdf/ri\\_era-expert-group-0308\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/infrastructures/pdf/ri_era-expert-group-0308_en.pdf)

### **Australia presents its Square Kilometre Array project**

On 6 March, an Australian delegation led by Research Minister Tim Carr presented Australia's project for the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio-telescope research infrastructure. The SKA is planned as an international research infrastructure and is also one of the selected projects of the ESFRI (European Strategy Forum for Research Infrastructures) Roadmap. ESFRI has estimated the construction costs of the SKA at €1.1 billion. 19 countries are so far interested in this project, but the location of the infrastructure remains an issue of debate.

Radio-telescopes detect the radio waves emitted when hydrogen atoms modify their structure (a so-called "spin-flip") and therefore allow to "seeing" the hydrogen present in space, giving astronomers indications about the nature and even the history of distant galaxies. However, to detect these very low frequency radio waves, a large surface spotted with telescopes is needed. Moreover, the latter need to be in a relatively flat part of the earth devoid of any interferences from human-generated radio waves (from radio transmitters, mobile phones etc.). In the southern hemisphere, which is generally more suited for astronomical observation, there are so far only two sites that would fit these stringent requirements: one in Western Australia and one in the south of Africa (including South Africa and some of its neighbouring countries).

The Australian site presents certain advantages, the most important being the high level of technological know-how present in the country and the commitment of the Australian government for this project. The telescope is planned to be located in a radio-quiet zone of 240km radius near the city of Geraldton, north of Perth in Western Australia. Pilot tests have already been undertaken at the site and scientists are currently performing a preparatory study partially financed by the Infrastructures programme of FP7. A decision on whether the SKA will be built and on its location will be decided in 2011 at the earliest.

More information on the Australian SKA project can be found under: [www.ska.gov.au](http://www.ska.gov.au)

## **Publications**

### **Work Programme of ENIAC Joint Technology Initiative**

ENIAC, the Joint Technology Initiative (JTI) in the field of nanoelectronics, is expected to launch its first call this spring. There will only be one call in 2008. According to the draft Work Programme prepared by Aeneas, the industrial association representing European industry in the JTI, ENIAC would focus its 2008 call on the following three topics:

- Transport and Mobility
- Security and Safety
- Energy and Environment

For the call foreseen in 2009 three other topics would remain (Health and Wellness, Communication, Infotainment). Technical aspects such as design methods and tools and equipment and materials, have been defined as overlapping topics, which should be handled in each of the above mentioned themes.

An ICT JTI Info Day and Brokerage event will be hold in Brussels on 4 April. Content of the first call of ENIAC as well as of the ARTEMIS JTI will be presented at this occasion:

<http://epistep.org/Artemis&Eniac.php>

More information on ENIAC can be found here:

<http://www.eniac.eu/index.php>

### **First Call for Associates in the Clean Sky JTI**

After its launch on 5 February (see Synopsis 2008/2), the Joint Technology Initiative (JTI) Clean Sky launched its first Call for Associate on 14 March. The Clean Sky calls can be of three types: Calls for Proposals, Calls for Tender or Calls for Associate. In the latter, the ITD (Integrated Technology Demonstrator) is looking for a participant with a long-term commitment to the JTI. This also implies making a financial contribution towards the JU (Joint Undertaking) Directorate. The current call will remain open till 16 June at 17:00, Brussels time.

More information on this call can be found under:

[http://www.cleansky.eu/index.php?arbo\\_id=113&set\\_language=en](http://www.cleansky.eu/index.php?arbo_id=113&set_language=en)

### **Report on gender equality in NMP under FP6**

The Directorate in charge of nanosciences, nanotechnologies, new industrial materials and production technologies (NMP) has recently published an executive summary of a study on gender equality in FP6, with special attention to its own fields of action. This summary is part of a wider study conducted by the Science and Society Directorate for all of FP6's Thematic Priorities, which is currently being finalised under the title "Monitoring gender equality in the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme".

The authors of the NMP-focussed executive summary find for example that while the percentage of women participating in this Thematic Priority corresponds to the general percentage of women in science and engineering, analysis of the Work Programmes and Calls for Proposals revealed that gender dimensions are only addressed at a very generic level, without any references to gender issues that might be relevant for research. This and many other themes relevant for gender equality are described in the document, which will be invaluable to people interested in gender aspects of the natural science and engineering field.

The executive summary of the report, covering especially the NMP aspects, can be found under:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial\\_technologies/pdf/gender-in-nmp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial_technologies/pdf/gender-in-nmp_en.pdf)

### **Spending for Research and Development remains stable**

On 10 March, Eurostat, the EU's Statistical Office, has published the 2008 edition of Science, Technology and Innovation in Europe. The publication covers several indicators, amongst them one about R&D expenditure. The survey reveals that R&D spending in the EU 27 in 2006 stood at 1.84% of GDP, about the same percentage as in 2004 and 2005. However, the intensity of spending varies from 0.4% in Cyprus to 3.8% in Sweden and it is interesting to see that some newcomer Member States show the highest increase in R&D spending between 2000 and 2006 – e.g. R&D intensity in Estonia went from 0.61% to 1.14%. Nevertheless, the stability of the figures is a cause of concern, given the fact that the European Union's goal is an R&D spending of 3% of GDP by 2010.

The report also shows that in 2006, 4.8% of the EU labour force in the EU 27 worked as scientists or engineers, whereas the highest share were found in Belgium (7.8%), Ireland (6.8%) and Finland (6.7%).

The summary of the Eurostat's Report can be downloaded under:

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP\\_PRD\\_CAT\\_PREREL/PGE\\_CAT\\_PREREL\\_YEAR\\_R\\_2008/PGE\\_CAT\\_PREREL\\_YEAR\\_2008\\_MONTH\\_03/9-10032008-EN-BP.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_PRD_CAT_PREREL/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_R_2008/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2008_MONTH_03/9-10032008-EN-BP.PDF)

The full report can be downloaded under the following link:

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-EM-08-001/EN/KS-EM-08-001-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-EM-08-001/EN/KS-EM-08-001-EN.PDF)

### **Green light for the EIT**

On 11 March, the European Parliament adopted, in second reading without any modifications, the European Commission's proposal of October 2006 for the setting up of a European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). As the Parliament did not make any changes to the Council's common position of 21 January 2008, the proposal is deemed to be finally adopted, thereby ending the co-decision procedure in place for the EIT proposal.

As a reminder, the EIT will consist of several Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) and a Governing Board seconded by a lean central administration. KICs are thought to be virtual networks consisting of universities, research centres and private companies; minimum three partners from two different countries and at least one higher education institution and one private company are required for a KIC.

With the adoption of the proposal, the European Commission's Directorate General in charge, DG Education and Culture (DG EAC), has started to work on the implementation of the EIT, focussing on following points:

- Establishment of the Governing Board: Already on 5 February, Education Commissioner Jan Figel announced the appointment of a four person identification committee for the 18 members of the EIT Governing Board (see Synopsis 2008/2). The dedicated "EIT Task Force" at DG EAC is currently compiling the results of the first stage of the consultation, closed on 28 March, which focused on the selection criteria for the Governing Board members. About 130 responses have been received. The second stage of the consultation, in which names of candidates can be submitted by European organisations, will be open for a short time in April. Based on these suggestions, the Governing Board members should be appointed by June.
- Seat and administration of the EIT: The purely political decision on the location of the seat of the EIT could be taken as early as 19-20 June, at the European Council (Heads of State and Government) meeting in Brussels. Indeed, due to its sensitivity, the decision has to be taken at the highest political level, but the Slovenian Presidency is apparently determined to move this topic forward. So far, Budapest, Vienna and Worclaw (Poland) have officially submitted their candidacy for hosting the EIT's main office. The chosen location will accommodate the Governing Board and the approx. 60 staff. These people will support the Governing Board at a purely administrative level.
- Selection of the KICs: According to the Commission's plans, the first KICs will be selected towards the end of 2009. The Governing Board will define the selection procedure and apply it to submitted proposals with the help of external evaluators during 2009. The themes proposed in the EIT Regulation (climate change, renewable energies, ICT) could be taken up, or other themes could be chosen by the Board. One important selection criterion will be the ability of planned KICs to attract additional funding, notably from the private sector. According to the Commission, interested participants should build on existing cooperation structures to develop more integrated partnerships.
- Participation of third countries: The Commission is very interested in the participation of third countries and their organisations. Three levels of involvement of such organisations in the EIT could be envisaged: First, in a project-based participation, a third country organisation could participate in a KIC in addition to the minimally required partners. Alternatively, an institution could sign an agreement with the EIT for a more extended partnership. Finally, a third country government could sign an association agreement with the EU for the EIT. Whether third country participants could get funded by EU money in the first and second case is yet unclear, but not impossible.

With these implementation steps well on track, the Commission is also interested in increasing the dialogue with stakeholders. As for every long-term project, only time will tell if the original idea of Commission President Barroso will indeed deliver on the vision and will really "innovate the way knowledge is transferred" between academia and industry in Europe.

The Commission's new EIT website can be found under:

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

### **2009 to become the European Year of Creativity and Innovation?**

On 31 March the European Commission adopted a proposal to declare 2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. Later this year, the European Parliament and Council will take the final decision on this proposal.

The year should aim at creating an environment which is favourable to creativity and innovation. It should raise the awareness that there is an increasing need for special competences and skills in order to enable people to deal with the challenges of the knowledge-based society. The Commission mentions problem-solving and the practical application of knowledge and ideas, including subjects like mathematics, science and information and other technologies as examples. Education and training are therefore essential parts of these efforts, but also other policy domains such as enterprise, media, research, social and regional policy as well as rural development are concerned. All forms of innovation including social and entrepreneurial innovation should be addressed. According to the Commission, no separate budget will be used. The European Year of Creativity and Innovation should be financed through existing EU programmes and planned expenditures.

## ***Publications***

### **Intelligent Energy Europe: Call for Proposals 2008**

The Work Programme 2008 and the Call for Proposals 2008 of the Intelligent Energy Europe programme have been published on 12 March. This EU programme is part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and promotes the efficient production and use of energy and aims to increase the use of renewable energy sources (see also Synopsis 2007/4).

The key aspects of the Work Programme lie within the usual fields of the Intelligent Energy Europe programme: Energy efficiency and rational use of resources (SAVE), new and renewable energy sources (ALTENER) and energy in transport (STEER).

Organisations can apply for financial support for their projects until 26 June 2008; about € 45 million will be made available in order to support up to 75% of the project costs. Any public or private organisation from the EU, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Croatia (but not Switzerland) can apply. At least three different organisations from three different countries must be involved in a project. Funds will be available for capacity building, building and spreading of know-how, skill and methods, exchange of experience, development of market intelligence, policy input, awareness raising as well as relevant information provision and education. However, R&D or demonstrations projects as well as any investments in infrastructure cannot be funded.

All the documents can be found under:

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/call\\_for\\_proposals/call\\_library\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/call_for_proposals/call_library_en.htm)

## **Education**

### **Europe launches Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education**

On 4 March, the European Quality Assurance Register in Higher Education (EQAR) has been officially launched in Brussels in order to improve the quality of European higher education. The Register has been established in the context of the Bologna Process by the so-called "E4" Group: the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European Students Union (ESU).

The Bologna Process, now involving 46 countries, aims at creating a single European Higher Education Area by 2010 by removing obstacles to the mobility of student and academic staff and

by developing a system of compatible and comparable degrees. To reach this goal, there is a need to ensure high standards of higher education across Europe. The new register (EQAR) provides clear and objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies working in Europe. Although Member States already have their own national quality assurance agencies, the EQAR will serve as an instrument to improve the quality of those national agencies and will provide a means for higher education institutions to choose between different agencies on the register, if that is compatible with national regulations. The inclusion on the EQAR is voluntary and will be based in compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance – a set of principles that have been approved at European level by European Education Ministers in 2005. Non-profit associations of stakeholders, social partners and Bologna signatory countries will be responsible for the governing and co-funding of the EQAR and a committee composed of independent experts will be responsible for the admission. Furthermore, applications to the register will be accepted from summer 2008 onwards.

For more information about the EQAR visit the website: [www.eqar.eu](http://www.eqar.eu)

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area can be found under: [http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG\\_v03.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/files/ESG_v03.pdf)

### **E-Twinning: Best projects awarded at a conference in Bucharest**

Three years ago, an EU initiative has been launched to encourage schools to create internet network partnerships. This so-called eTwinning action is now part of the Comenius programme within the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

The eTwinning action enables schools in 28 European countries to work together using Information and Communication Technology (ICT), e.g. to find partners for collaborative school projects or to exchange knowledge in discussion platforms. By now, over 35'000 schools across Europe have joined in.

An eTwinning conference was now held in Bucharest, hosting more than four hundred participants and teachers from across Europe, as well as representatives from eTwinning's central and national support services and important school education players. At the event, the eight best eTwinning projects for 2006-2007 were awarded. From over 400 assessed projects, the top eight finalists came from 26 schools from 17 countries and featured four categories, three by age (4-10, 11-15, 16-19) as well as a category for science and mathematics. The assessment was based on the innovative nature, integration of the curriculum, collaboration, creativity and transferability of the project.

For more information, visit the eTwinning Portal: <http://www.eTwinning.net>

## ***Publications***

### **EUROPASS portal reaches 10 million visits**

More than 10 million visits and 2.5 million curriculum vitae filled out online have been registered at the Europass site since its official launch three years ago. Europass, created by the European Commission and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), is designed to encourage mobility and lifelong learning in an enlarged Europe by making citizens qualification and skills transparent and easily understandable not only to the labour market but also for learning purposes. It consists of five documents: curriculum vitae, languages passport, Europass mobility and certificate and a diploma supplement, describing the diploma or certificate. The Europass internet site aims to help half a billion citizens in 32 European countries and is available in 26 languages. Due to big differences among the national education and training systems, it is mainly implemented and promoted by national Europass centers in close cooperation with the European Commission and CEDEFOP.

To visit the Europass website: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>

## School Autonomy in Europe – Eurydice Report discovers significant disparities

Eurydice, Europe's education information network, presented a survey of the current state of school autonomy in 30 European countries. The study includes primary and secondary education and covers the period 2006/2007. It focuses on the levels of autonomy in terms of financial resource management (public and private funding) and human resources management (electing teachers, school heads, etc.). A historical overview of the reforms related to school autonomy is also provided, covering more than 20 years and showing very different results.

Eurydice shows that no country has given complete autonomy in a given domain, but there are obviously geographical and political patterns: in countries of Southern Europe, transfers of competencies have remained limited whereas in Nordic countries the freedom of local actors thoroughly exists. As for the political factor, the English-speaking world and some countries in Central and Eastern Europe show a strong will for school autonomy development. In general, the most autonomous countries are Belgium, Spain, Italy, Romania and the United Kingdom.

The report is available on: [http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/0\\_integral/090EN.pdf](http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/0_integral/090EN.pdf)

## ◆ **SwissCore Küche**

### IGLO Open hosted by SwissCore: latest developments on the EIT

On 1 April, SwissCore hosted the monthly IGLO Open meeting organised for all colleagues of the offices of the Informal Group of RTD Liaison offices in Brussels (IGLO). The presentation was focused on the latest developments of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). Lucia Recalde Langarica, Head of the EIT dedicated Task force at DG EAC (Education and Culture) presented the details about the setting up of the EIT, concentrating on the Governing Board and its function during the following months. More than 55 persons attended this now really topical meeting, where plenty of new information has been given (see article above p. 8).

