

SwissCore Synopsis

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♦ Seen from Brussels

In May, major initiatives made their way

Last month saw the progress of several major initiatives that had been prepared by the European Commission over the last year. First, after launching its first call in December 2006, the European Research Council (ERC) announced that the first Grant Agreements have been signed, which means that the early career stage scientists who were awarded these grants will be able to start the research they had outlined in the proposals submitted at the end of April 2007 (p. 2).

In addition, three Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI) issued their first calls for proposal at the beginning of the month, namely the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI; p.4), ARTEMIS and ENIAC (p. 5). These calls will act as a proof of principle that these industry-driven research partnerships with the European Commission are attractive to the major league scientists who are required to overcome industry's R&D bottlenecks. If the response to these calls is insufficient in numbers or quality, the current model of the JTI might have to be revised. This is even more important as a fifth JTI proposal (on Fuel Cells and Hydrogen), has just been adopted by the Council of the European Union (p. 5).

As one of the five initiatives to following up on last year's Green paper on the European Research Area, the European Commission tabled the "Communication on the European partnership for researchers" at the end of May. This Communication addresses the pressing issue of human resources in science and technology, and how to facilitate the trans-national mobility of this specialised class of "knowledge workers" (p. 7). Following the recommendations on knowledge transfer in April and the current Communication, the three remaining initiatives should be presented by the Commission in July.

The discussions regarding the seat of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT) have also progressed: most candidate cities have been turned down and Budapest seems to emerge as the favourite (p. 8). As Hungary does not host any Commission Agency, the Council of the EU (with the exception of Poland) is likely to give its support to the Hungarian capital.

Last but not least, the European Commission has launched a new phase of TEMPUS, a programme designed to support the modernisation of education in third countries (p. 10), while the celebrated ERASMUS student exchange programme enjoys more popularity than ever (p 11).

With so much progress reached in one month, it is now time to consolidate what has been achieved, especially as a majority of these initiatives are new and the experience with them rather limited. Scientists will need time to reckon on the ERC as a new player in the European research landscape, and they will have to adapt to the new industry-driven JTIs and their specific rules and regulations. Indeed, these initiatives should not lose their "passengers" as they make their way forward...

♦ Research

7th Framework Programme (FP7)

Progress and changes at the ERC

On 15 May, the European Research Council (ERC) announced the signature of the first Starting Grants (StG). The total budget for the first round of these grants will amount to about €335 million, which means that at least 297 proposals will be funded, very close to the 300 that were originally announced (Synopsis 2008/1). The ERC expects most grant agreements to be signed by the end of June; a complete list of StG grant holders will be published shortly thereafter.

The negotiations leading to the signing of the first StG were overshadowed by reports of complications, in most parts due to the rather narrow interpretation of the rules by the staff of the ERC Executive Agency. Despite early promises by some members of the Scientific Council that

the ERC grants would be much more flexible than the rest of the Framework Programme, the reality is that the FP7 rules also fully apply to the ERC. In addition, the staff of the Executive Agency has even included new requirements: for example, it asked for the breakdown of the budget in cost categories (salaries, travel, equipment...). Such cost categories had been requested by the European Court of Auditors during the drafting of the Rules for Participation, but the European Commission had refused to introduce them on the grounds that it would impede with the flexibility needed for research projects. It was therefore somewhat of a surprise to see them reappear in the grants for “frontier research”, where one would expect even more flexibility is needed. Following an intense debate in the ERC Programme Committee, it seems that this extra table has only indicative value and should not be followed too strictly. Only in 18 months, when the first reporting period is over, will we know if “flexibility” is just an empty word at the ERC.

Besides the signing of the first grants, the ERC will have to handle upcoming personnel changes. On 23 May, the resignation of three members of the Scientific Council was announced: Prof. Manuel Castells (ES), Prof. Paul J. Crutzen (NL) and Prof. Lord May of Oxford (UK). These three eminent scientists stepped down in April for personal reasons. The European Commission has now to put in place a procedure for the selection of new members of the Scientific Council. Indeed, the first 22 members had been selected by a ad-hoc identification committee headed by Lord Patton and were appointed by Research Commissioner Potocnik in July 2005. It seems that a similar procedure will be used for the replacement of members, based on the criteria set forth in the Commission Decision establishing the ERC. The names of the new members are expected to be announced early 2009; until then the Scientific Council will function with 19 members only. In addition, the ERC Executive Agency is looking for new staff: a call for 80 new Temporary Agents has been published, including research programme offices, policy analysts, IT specialists, as well as financial and legal officers. The posts to be filled are published on the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) website (see link below). Unlike regular European Commission posts, these positions are also open to the EFTA countries’ nationals, including applicants from Switzerland.

The Temporary Agent posts can be found under:

http://europa.eu/epso/non_permanent_posts/temp-staff_ercea_en.htm

Unique Registration Facility launched

On 28 April, the European Commission launched a new system for the registration of the participants in FP7. The Unique Registration Facility (URF) will keep a register of all organisations (universities, research organisations, SMEs, companies, civil society organisations etc.) that participate in FP7 projects and will provide a unique identifier (the Participant Identification Code, see below) for each of them. This should allow to simplify the administrative procedures leading to the signing of the grant agreement, as for example the proof of existence of participants, which in the ideal case will have to be documented only once for the whole duration of FP7. The URF is composed of three complementary parts:

- Participant Identification Code (PIC): This is the code that allows the URF to recognise a participant when data is entered in the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS) and to automatically validate this participant during contract negotiations by using the Negotiations Electronic Forms (NEF; see Synopsis 2008/3). So far, the legal and financial information about a participant was requested on a project-by-project basis, leading to enormous duplications of information about the same organisation. Moreover, this data had to be submitted both at the submission and at the negotiation stage. To avoid the repeated submission of the same documents, each “legal entity” (legal form of a participating organisation) will be assigned a PIC that can be repeatedly used both for submission and negotiation. There are basically two ways for an organisation to get a PIC: it can either register the “legal entity” on the URF website (see link below), or the contact indicated on the successful proposal of an organisation will receive a PIC at negotiation stage.

- Legal Entity Appointed Representative (LEAR): The above process has however two caveats: each organisation should only have one PIC, and the people submitting a project have to be aware of this code. To remedy to the fact that they could be multiple PICs per organisation and to act as a holder of the organisation's PIC is the role of the LEAR. This person will be officially appointed by the organisation's authorised officer (e.g. president, chancellor, director, CEO) through an exchange of letters with the European Commission. The LEAR will be in charge of resolving problems linked with the PIC (such as having multiple PICs for the same organisation) and he will request the necessary modifications when an organisation changes its status (e.g. an SME that does not fit the EU definition anymore). In addition, he will be able to monitor the use of the organisation's PIC through a special access to the URF. His interlocutor at the Commission will be the Central Validation Team.
- Central Validation Team (CVT): This team within the Commission is responsible for the validation of the organisations participating in FP7. It will issue PICs for yet unregistered organisations at negotiation stage and match the data to be validated with the PIC. If multiple PICs correspond to the same validation data (legal & financial documents), it will ask the LEAR to confirm that the different PICs all correspond to the same organisation.

Once most organisations already participating in the Framework Programme will have one single PIC, the administrative burden of submitting legal and financial data multiple times should be alleviated. In addition, monitoring the use of their PIC will allow large, decentralised organisations to have a better overview on their participation to FP7. These new information technology tools should therefore bring a real administrative relief to FP7 participants.

The URF can be found under:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/urf>

The procedure for the registration of the LEAR can be found under:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/urf-lear_en.html

Innovative Medicines Initiative: First calls launched

On 30 April, the Joint Technology Initiative "Innovative Medicines Initiative" (JTI IMI) launched its first calls for proposals in the frame of a well-attended public information day. As a reminder, JTI are public-private partnerships between the European Commission and the industry in a specific sector to implement a Strategic Research Agenda defined by the industrial partners. In the case of IMI, the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) is the private partner in the JTI. The aim of IMI is to make the drug development more efficient and to improve the quality and safety of medicines. This will be achieved by addressing the bottlenecks in the development process of innovative medicines.

Together with the call topics, the European Commission has issued the rules and procedures specifically applying to IMI:

- Participation: At least 2 legal entities which are members of EFPIA, and two non-EFPIA legal entities per project. The research has to be performed in the EU or in an Associated Country. There is however no requirement for these organisations to be from different Member States or Associated Countries.
- Funding: Academic institutions, SMEs, patient organisations and non-for-profit legal entities are eligible for funding. 75% of the direct research costs will be reimbursed (management, training: 100%). The overhead is limited at 20%. EFPIA participants will not receive Community funding.
- Consortium: An EFPIA company will always assume the role of the coordinator. In a first step, a "public" consortium (academia, SMEs, non-profit organisations) will be formed, which (if successful) will join the industry consortium predefined in the call.
- Evaluation procedure: In a first stage, Expressions of Interest (short proposals) coming from "public" consortia will be evaluated, with the pre-defined industry consortium in an advisory role. As a result of this first evaluation, one single project will be selected and invited to submit a full proposal, together with the industry consortium. At the second stage, this single

proposal will go through a kind of “quality check”, without the involvement of the industry partners.

- Project agreement: This document takes up the role of the consortium agreement in FP7. As the IPR rules differ between IMI and FP7, interested public organisations should take particular care in reviewing this document before signing it.

With rules regarding crucial elements like participation, intellectual property and overhead cost reimbursement differing significantly from FP7, it remains to be seen if this regulatory framework tailor-made for the pharmaceutical industry will also fit the public organisations that wish to respond to the calls. If IMI is not able to attract the leading scientists from the public sector that industry needs to make their projects a success, the Governing Board of the JTI will have to adapt the rules and make them more attractive to the participants whose scientific expertise they require.

The application pack for the first IMI call can be found under:

http://imi.europa.eu/calls-01_en.html

First call of ARTEMIS and ENIAC JU launched

On 8 May the two Joint Technology Initiatives ARTEMIS and ENIAC launched their calls for 2008. Both initiatives are Europe-wide public-private research partnerships in the field of ICT research and expected to have an impact on European competitiveness.

The ARTEMIS Joint Undertaking (JU) is formed by the European Commission, 20 countries and ARTEMISIA, the industrial association which represents the research community and industry. ARTEMIS will support close-to-market research in the field of embedded systems. Computers are already now present in everyday devices like mobile phones, credit cards, cars and planes or places like homes, offices and factories. Such embedded systems are expected to become even more important in the future. The budget 2008 for ARTEMIS will be around €200 million: €100 million coming from the European Commission and the countries that joined ARTEMIS and another €100 million from industry. The contribution of the European Commission will be 16.7% of eligible project costs, taken from the budget of FP7. The rest will be financed by the ARTEMIS member states and the industries that are involved in the project. Deadline for the call 2008 is 3 September.

ENIAC, standing for European Nanoelectronics Initiative Advisory Council, has launched its first call the same day as ARTEMIS, and it will also close the same day, 3 September. Nanoelectronics will go beyond microelectronics and will make it possible that the number of transistors that can be integrated on a single chip reaches one billion. As for ARTEMIS also for the ENIAC JU the Commission's contribution to projects will amount to 16.7% of eligible project costs, the rest will be funded by the 17 ENIAC member states, by industry and research organisations, which are represented in the AENEAS association. The funds from the European Commission and the ENIAC member states for 2008 are expected to amount to €90 million.

As EU funding for both initiatives is taken from the FP7 budget, it is important to know that also participants from Switzerland are eligible for funding. However, as Switzerland has neither joined the ARTEMIS nor the ENIAC Joint Undertaking, the funding of successful Swiss applicants will only amount to the 16.7% coming from the European Commission. ENIAC as well as ARTEMIS have each posted a vacancy note for the post of an Executive Director. Eligible candidates need to be citizens of an EU Member State or of a country associated to FP7.

For more information on ARTEMIS and ENIAC and their first calls please visit:

<https://www.artemis-ju.eu/> and <http://www.eniac.eu/>

The vacancy notes for the post of the Executive Director can be found in the Official Journal:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:130A:SOM:EN:HTML>

Green light from the Council for a Fuel Cells and Hydrogen JTI

At the Competitiveness Council meeting of 29-30 May, the Council of the European Union adopted the proposal for setting up a Joint Technology Initiative (JTI) for research in the field of

fuel cells and hydrogen that the European Commission had tabled on 10 October 2007 (see Synopsis 2007/8). This public-private partnership will run under the name Fuel Cells and Hydrogen (FCH) JTI and will be jointly implemented by the European Commission and the “European Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Technology Initiative Industry Grouping AISBL”, an international non-for-profit association under Belgian law.

Like its four homologues (ARTEMIS, ENIAC, IMI, CleanSky), this JTI also required the setting up of a Joint Undertaking under Art. 171 of the EU Treaty. The governance of the JTI will be handled through a Governing Board, in which the Commission and the Industry Grouping are equally represented. The daily management will be the responsibility of an Executive Director, supported by a Programme Office located in Brussels. A Scientific Committee will advise the Governing Board, while the EU Member States and Associated Countries will be involved through a States Representatives Group. These bodies will be completed by an annual Stakeholders’ General Assembly, where all the involved public and private organisations (including research project participants) can discuss the ongoing and future activities of the JTI.

The scientific priorities are written down in a Strategic Research Agenda defined by the industry in the field. The JTI will support applied research and development to support the broad market introduction of fuel cell technologies. The European Commission will fund the JTI for six years with €470 million, which are to be matched with at least the same amount of in-kind contributions from industry. The Community funding will come out of the budget of several Themes of FP7 (Energy €301.6 M; Transport €81.4 M; NMP €47.9 M; Environment €19.1 M), as the JTI impacts on all these four subjects. The main part of these funds will be awarded through calls for proposals to project consortia of minimum three independent partners from three different member States or Associated Countries. One partner has to be a member of the Industry Grouping and will fulfil the role of the coordinator. Notwithstanding these rules, many implementation details still remain to be defined.

With the Council’s adoption, the way is free for the JTI to take the road: the first calls of proposals are expected to be published after the summer, and the official launch of the FCH JTI will take place at the first Stakeholder’s general Assembly on 14-15 October in Brussels.

The adopted version of the FCH JTI proposal can be found under:

<http://www.fchindustry-jti.eu/documents/FCHJTIRegulation.pdf>

EU Research Policy

New organisation at DG Research

At the beginning of May, a new organisational structure entered into force at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Research (DG RTD). With the reallocation of the Directorates in three groups instead of two, a third Deputy Director-General has been recruited: the Finn Anneli Pauli, former Deputy Director-General of the DG Joint Research Centre, will lead the “strategic” Directorates responsible for the implementation of the European Research Area.

In addition, the responsibility for the different Directorates has been reallocated: as before, Deputy Director-General Zoran Stancic will be responsible for the “thematic directorates”, while the Directorates dealing with outsourcing activities which will now be under the responsibility of Deputy Director-General Daniel Jacob. This concerns in particular Directorate S with the ERC Executive Agency, Directorate T with the Research Executive Agency, Directorate F (Health) with the JTI Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) and Directorate H (Transport) with the JTI Clean Sky. The fact that the outsourcing activities are now grouped under the responsibility of Deputy Director-General Jacob, who is known as very skilled administrator, emphasizes the importance given to these new initiatives by Director General Silva Rodriguez.

It is also interesting that all the “political activities” of DG Research are concentrated in Directorate A, which is headed by Clara De La Torre under the direct supervision of the Director-General himself.

The new organisation chart can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/research/pdf/organisation_en.pdf#pagemode=none

Partnership to boost single European labour market for researchers

On 23 May, the European Commission published a communication on “Better Careers and more Mobility: A European Partnership for Researchers”, proposing to develop a partnership with Member States to ensure the availability of the necessary researchers. As a follow-up action of the Commissions’ ERA Green Paper, the communication faces the current obstacles of researchers’ mobility and the massive disincentives for those wishing to move jobs between institutions, academia and industry as well as between countries. Originally it was planned to call this initiative “the researchers’ passport” but the term “partnership” intends to capture not only the element of mobility but also of better career conditions and possibilities.

The partnership aims to align and to focus the efforts of individual Member States by establishing joint priority actions. Key areas in which the partnership should make a commitment to achieve measurable progress by end of 2010 are:

- Systematically open recruitment and the portability of grants: by ensuring open, transparent, competition-based recruitment of researchers and establishment of a model similar to the “money follows researcher” scheme
- Meet the social security and supplementary pension needs of mobile researchers: by calling attention to EU social security rules as well as easing the transfer of supplementary pension rights for highly-mobile workers and encouraging pan-EU pension schemes targeted especially at researchers
- Provide attractive employment and working conditions: by providing better career development opportunities to early-stage researchers and more flexible contracts for senior researchers. Moreover, by achieving adequate gender representation as well as promoting better work-life balance
- Enhance the training, skills and experience of European researchers: by improving their employability and chances of promotion through training and ensuring better links between academia and industry to improve their employability and ability to turn research into results.

Coordinated action in these areas between the Commission and the Member States would lead to a genuine European labour market for researchers. However, as Commissioner Potoczniak warned recently, the new research plan could go against some Member States interests and will therefore not easily be realizable. Especially when it comes to the transfer of pension rights and to social insurances in general, not the research ministries but other ministries are concerned.

According to the current time table conclusions from the Competitiveness Council can be expected in September 2008. The implementation on national level should start in 2009 and be assessed in 2011. However, the Commission did not point out yet how any progress regarding researcher’s mobility can be monitored and benchmarked.

Link to the full text of the Communication:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/press/2008/pdf/com_2008_31_1_en.pdf

Publications

European Data Protection Supervisor to play a role in EU research

According to a recently published policy paper, the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) sees a need for privacy and data protection requirements to be more involved in EU research policy and projects, particularly in the field of ICT. The paper describes how the EDPS can help guaranteeing privacy and data protection both in the preparation of the EU research Framework Programme as well as for individual research projects. Contributions from the EDPS could include participation in workshops and conferences on future challenges for EU research policy, contribution to EU research advisory boards and provision of opinions on data protection matters to them and assistance in the evaluation process of proposals, in particular regarding data

protection issues. Additionally, the EDPS could identify emerging technological trends that are expected to have an impact in the EU data protection framework.

The policy paper “The EDPS and EU Research and Technological Development” can be found here:

http://www.edps.europa.eu/EDPSWEB/webdav/site/mySite/shared/Documents/EDPS/Publications/Papers/PolicyP/08-04-28_PP_RTD_EN.pdf

The future of the Internet – Compendium on FP7 projects

On 26 May, the European Commission published a compendium which gives an overview on the 70 research projects related to the future of the Internet, which have been supported under the first round of FP7. About €300 million for the projects come from FP7 and another €200 million from the research institutions and industry involved in them.

The “Internet of Things” which is often seen as a part of the future internet and which is also presented in the compendium, will be topic of the first SwissCore Innovation Briefing (see article in SwissCore Küche).

The publication can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=1537

Stakeholders consultation on the European Metrology Research Programme (EMRP)

The European Commission is preparing a legislative proposal to support a group of EU Member States in their initiative to integrate their respective national research programme of Metrology (= measurement science) by means of Article 169 of the Treaty. The aim of this joint European Metrology Research Programme (EMRP) is to develop new capabilities in strategic areas and in diffusion of knowledge. For this purpose, DG Research intends to have consulted all stakeholders and interested parties by autumn 2008 to assess the impact of the Art. 169 EMRP legislative proposal using an online format. The initiative is expected to be tabled by the Commission by the end of 2008.

The consultation on the EMRP Art. 169 initiative can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/consultations/pdf/art169_stakeholder_consultationpaper_en.pdf

Innovation

Race for EIT seat almost decided – Budapest is clearly ahead

During an informal dinner on 29 May the research ministers of EU Member States could not yet reach an agreement on the administrative headquarter of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). However, during the dinner of the ministers it turned out that Budapest and Wroclaw were the two candidates with the best prospects, being clearly ahead of the other candidate cities (those are Bratislava jointly with Vienna, Jena and San Cugat del Valles). Among Budapest and Wroclaw it was the Hungarian capital which got more support by EU research ministers. At the end only the Polish minister was opposed to Budapest, apparently sticking to the instruction to support by all means the Polish candidacy and no other. In order to give Poland a possibility to back out of the race without losing the face, the ministers decided that the EIT seat has to be in a new member state that does not host any EU agencies so far. As Poland already hosts the EU border agency Frontex, the two criteria only fit for Budapest. Given the two criteria it is expected that Poland will give up his veto position.

The final decision about the EIT seat could be taken during an Intergovernmental Conference in Brussels on 18 June. As the EIT Governing Board is expected to be nominated by the end of June or early July, Poland will be under increasing pressure to back down. According to some rumours the list of the EIT Governing Board members already exists, whereas out of the 18 members two would come from Germany. One of the first tasks of the Governing Board will be

the search for an Executive Director of the EIT. The advertising of this post is expected for September 2009.

More information on the EIT and its establishment can be found here:

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

European inventors of the year honoured

On 6 May, the European inventor of the year prizes 2008 were awarded. The awards, which are run jointly by the European Commission and the European Patent Office (EPO), recognise inventions which have had an important impact on people's lives and which have been patented by the EPO. During the ceremony, taking place within the European Patent Forum in Ljubljana (Slovenia), four prizes were handed out, of which three were related to medical technologies. An independent jury selected the winners from a pool of nominees who patented and successfully marketed their inventions between 1993 and 2002. The winner of the SME award went to Scottish engineer Douglas Anderson and his team who developed the first scanning laser ophthalmoscope, which revolutionised the way eye exams are carried out and in particular made it much more patient friendly. The Optos scanning laser ophthalmoscope projects a beam composed of two lasers onto the retina. Light reflected back from the retina is converted into a digital image. The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Belgian biomedical researcher Erik De Clercq of the University of Leuven. He developed antiviral drugs for the treatment of viral infections such as HIV and hepatitis B and herpes. These innovative agents work by imitating the shape of the building blocks of DNA. The award for Non-European Inventors went to US biomedical engineer Philip Green of the non-profit research institute SRI International. Green has developed the da Vinci robotic surgery system that allows surgeons to carry out complex operations through incisions barely a couple of centimetres across. Finally, the Industry Award went to Norbert Enning and his team from car manufacturer Audi. Enning patented an all-aluminium car frame, which has made cars not only lighter and therefore environmental friendlier, but also safer.

For more information go to the EPO Website:

<http://www.epo.org/topics/news/2008/20080507.html>

Small Business Act to foster innovation and entrepreneurship in Europe

The European Commission is to adopt, most likely in July, the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA), an initiative that bundles different measures to stimulate European SME. The Commission proposes that the SBA act will be connected to the renewed Lisbon Strategy and that its implementation will therefore be assessed every year in the annual report on the Lisbon Strategy. According to a provisional version, the SBA will mainly consist of a communication, dealing with the concept of "Think Small First", that is to say that for instance new regulatory measures will be assessed whether they are SME friendly or not. Secondly, an action plan will list concrete measures, for example how SME's can get easier access to the internal market and to funding, and how the growth dynamic of European SME can be improved in general. In order to support SME's that have the intention to access markets outside the EU, "business centres" will be build up in fast growing third countries such as China or India. Thirdly, some key legislative proposals will be presented at the same time as the SBA.

As statistics show that European SME grow at a slower rate than their US counterparts, the above mentioned action plan will also focus on a series of measures that could foster innovation and research within SME. One of the measures will be an increased effort to raise SME participation in FP7 to 19% instead of 15%. Another measure mentioned is the improvement of the European patent system in order to assure a better protection of SME's intellectual property rights. However, the two instruments mentioned by the Commission, the creation of a European dispute-settlement case law on patents as well as the Community patent, are both by far no novel intentions.

Finally, some other actions proposed by the commission within the Small Business Act will focus on entrepreneurship and vocational skill. A European SME week will be held in 2009 and already in 2008 about 750 young entrepreneurs will have the possibility to join the initiative “Erasmus for young Entrepreneurs”. They will spend a certain time in another EU country in order to expand their entrepreneurial skills. The Commission is also preparing an initiative within the EU Leonardo programme, aiming to boost the mobility of apprentices and people carrying out vocational training outside institutional circuits.

More information on the SBA and on a public online consultation on it can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/sba_en.htm

Publications

New online magazine from DG Enterprise

The European Commission's Directorate General Enterprise and Industry has launched a new on-line magazine to present its policies and activities to a wider audience. Readers will gain easy access to the latest news on the work of DG Enterprise to improve the business climate. One of the articles in the first issue gives a summary on the European Presidency Conference on innovation and cluster policy which took place in Stockholm on 22-23 January and which aimed to give inputs for a communication on the same topic later in 2008.

The online magazine can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e_i/index_de.htm

Newsletter on European Technology Platforms

At the beginning of June, the first issue of the European Commissions newsletter on European Technology Platforms (ETP) was published. Information provided in the newsletter concern the internal organisation of ETP's, successful projects and policy developments which are of relevance for ETP's, such as standardisation or knowledge transfer. Finally, an event calendar lists upcoming conferences and meetings of ETP's.

The newsletter will be sent by email and uploaded three times a year on the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/newsletter/newsletter_issue1_en.htm

Education

Launch of the 4th phase of the Tempus programme

On 8 May 2008 the European Commission launched, during a conference organised in Cairo, the 4th phase of the Tempus programme. TEMPUS, an EU programme, is designed to support the modernisation of higher education in 28 partner countries of the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Northern Africa and the Middle East. The Cairo conference focused on one hand on the issue of quality and the role played by the Tempus programme in this field since its establishment in 1990 and on the other hand it was an occasion for dialogue between universities, experts and students from the 27 Member States (MS) and the 28 Tempus partner countries.

Aiming at creating an area of cooperation in the field of higher education between the European Union and its neighbours, Tempus has funded 6'500 projects, involving nearly 2'000 universities from its partner countries. Moreover, during 2000-2006, Tempus supported 788 joint European projects, 1'492 individual mobility grants and provided measures for 270 structural and complementary development projects. As a recent study, undertaken by the European Commission, shows a big success of the programme can be seen in the fact that it had a

considerable impact in changing the view from an input-oriented education towards an output-oriented education, which means paying more attention to what a person actually knows rather than on how long or where the person acquired the knowledge.

An essential part of the Tempus programme is to introduce quality assurance schemes in universities in partner countries in order to build trust into the system. Most of the 2'000 participating universities have adopted internal guidelines for quality assurance as well as methods for self-assessment and peer reviews. Nevertheless, there is still an urgent need in many countries to develop effective quality assurance mechanisms and to make them more visible within the university.

The European Commissions site on Tempus: <http://ec.europa.eu/tempus>

Executive Summary of the Tempus Impact Study:

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/tempus/doc/impact.pdf>

High Interest and Prize for ERASMUS Programme

The interest in the ERASMUS programme, the EU's education and training programme for mobility and cooperation in higher education across Europe, continues to increase. 159'324 students and 25'809 university teachers from 31 participating countries went abroad during the academic year 2006/2007, which is a 3% increase on the students and a 10% increase on the teachers side compared to 2005/2006.

Since the establishment in 1987, approximately 1.7 million students enjoyed a study abroad under the ERASMUS programme, which is about 3.5% of all European students. Having an overall Budget of €450 million per year under the EU's Life Long Learning Programme, the average grant during the year 2006/2007 for each student amounts up to €192 per month which is an accretion by 22% compared to the previous year, further increase is expected in the current year. From a geographical point of view, the country with the highest number of outgoing students remains Germany with around 23'900 students per year, followed by France, Spain and Italy. Spain is the most popular destination, receiving around 27'500 students a year, closely followed by France, Germany and the UK. However, the overall number of mobility students is decreasing; some countries, for instance Cyprus, Denmark or Ireland have experienced a decrease or even stagnation (Germany, Sweden) in the number of outgoing students. Nevertheless, the new 12 MS which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 can be proud of a rise by 10% in student's mobility, a figure which is remarkably above the European average.

Business, languages/philological and social sciences are the three most popular subject areas for Erasmus students, who stay averagely for 6.5 months abroad. Coming to Erasmus teachers, the main subject areas are language/philological sciences, engineering/technology and business studies. An increasing number of teachers benefiting from the mobility programme has been assessed as well; 25'809 teachers participated in the academic year 2006/2007, which is an increase of 10% compared to the year before. Germany, Spain and France are the countries sending most university teachers and Germany, France and Italy are as well the biggest recipients.

The success of the Erasmus Programme has also been honoured recently by the NoviaSalcedo Foundation of Bilbao, Spain, which aims at helping young people through their integration into the social and professional world. The Prince of Asturias itself handed out the "Prize for Excellence in integrating young people into the workforce" at a ceremony taking place in Bilbao on 20 May.

Nevertheless, despite the big success of the programme and the continuing growth in student and teacher mobility in recent years, the rate of growth has slowed. An annual increase of around 10% would be needed to reach the EU target of 3 million students by 2012.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/lfp/erasmus/index_en.html

First Swiss Innovation Briefing, followed by a football evening

On 7 June the whistle blew for the kick-off of the European Football Championship (EURO2008) in Austria and Switzerland. As a host country Switzerland is particularly involved in that event. For this reason, SwissCore and the Mission of Switzerland to the EU will invite their colleagues and Brussels based contacts to a special event, linking together football and innovation. On 11 June, the first Swiss Innovation Briefing will focus on the future of the internet and the role that Europe can play. It will showcase some cutting-edge technology related to the concept of the “Internet of Things” and emerging from R&D in Switzerland. Presentations will range from a high-tech environmental monitoring system for the Alps, presented by Professor Karl Aberer (EPFL), to a visual search engine which allows requesting information on objects by simply taking a picture of them, presented by Herbert Bay from ETHZ start-up Kooaba. Marc Langheinrich (ETHZ) will speak on the vision and potential of the “Internet of Things”, illustrate its potential and point out the societal challenges such as privacy and data protection. The presentations will be followed by comments from an expert of the European Commission who is currently preparing an initiative on that topic as well as recommendations on RFID. As Europe is lagging behind when it comes to creating value added internet services, the “Internet of Things” offers an opportunity to catch up.

The briefing will be followed by an evening dedicated to networking and football, including live broadcast of EURO2008 matches in the courtyard of the Mission of Switzerland to the EU.

New SwissCore trainee: Séverine Barioni

A new trainee at SwissCore, Séverine Barioni, has started on 2 June for a duration of six months. She received her Bachelor degree in Political Science from the University of Geneva in October 2007, and in September 2008 she will start a Master degree in European studies at the European Institute of the same university.

Her professional goal is to become a diplomat and to work at the Swiss Mission to the European Union. She likes learning foreign languages and enjoys travelling and socialising. The traineeship at SwissCore constitutes a great opportunity for her studies and for her professional future as she will be able to closely follow the functioning of the European Institutions in Brussels.