

SwissCore Synopsis

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♦ Seen from Brussels

New initiatives dropping like leaves

In the past month, the activity in and around the European institutions has not slowed down: several initiatives have been launched, amongst them the fifth Joint Technology Initiative (p. 2). While the initial excitement over this new type of research funding has been somewhat curbed by the administrative problems experienced by the JTI, the new Commission initiative for Joint Programming is building steam in Brussels. Ten major energy research centres have pledged to put together some of their research activities and programmes (p. 4), and an initiative on Alzheimer and other neurodegenerative diseases has been pushed ahead by the French Presidency. Innovation has not been left alone; a Communication on trans-national cooperation of clusters was tabled last month (p. 6). The Lifelong Learning Programme has issued a call and devised a new initiative called Comenius Regio, to promote trans-regional exchange (p. 10).

However, with the plethora of ongoing activities and new initiatives, it is hard to see the forest behind the trees. Between Joint Programming, a renewed form of Networks of Excellence (p. 3), the Knowledge and Innovation Communities of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology, the Joint Technology Initiatives, the initiatives under Art. 169 and so forth, it is hard to see the connections, notwithstanding the inherent logic. Seemingly some of these initiatives are developed in isolation of each other, or with very little cross-talk; a general strategy and a time line for the diverse actions is lacking in our view. One of the New Year's resolutions of the European Commission could be to rake up all the leaves and put them in the right baskets. Otherwise, the Research Framework Programme, which had been elegantly designed in four major axes, will run the risk of becoming alike an overgrown hedge of a garden in which scientists will too easily get lost.

♦ Research

7th Framework Programme (FP7)

The Fuel Cells and Hydrogen JTI hits the road

On 14 October, the European Commission officially launched the fifth Joint Technology Initiative (JTI), in the field of Fuel Cells and Hydrogen (FCH). The aim of this public-private partnership between the Commission and the industry is to develop the engines of the future and the clean energy carrier to fuel them. The undertaken research and (especially) development efforts should lead to a mass-market rollout of these new technologies by 2020. The first call for the FCH JTI, with an indicative budget of €28.1 million, has been issued on 8 October, covering areas such as transportation and refuelling infrastructures, as well as production, storage and distribution of hydrogen (see Synopsis 2008/5 for more details on the JTI).

At the launch event gathering all stakeholders at Brussel's Autoworld (a museum containing one of the largest collection of cars from past times in Europe – maybe a tip for your next visit to Brussels? ☺), the Commission services currently in charge of the JTI and the industry involved in the partnership laid out their plans for the coming six years. The Commission will contribute €470 million coming from no less than four FP7 Themes (Energy, Transport, NMP, Environment) to the total budget, while industry will provide at least the same amount, mostly through in-kind contributions. The call budgets will be gradually ramped up, to mirror the increasing FP7 budgets. While the Commission was all smiles at the event, some industry representatives, especially those from SMEs, could not hold back their frustration over the length of the administrative procedures. Indeed, it currently still takes one year from the evaluation result to the signature of the project, which is judged to be far too long by industry. The administration of the JTI is currently still under the control of the Commission, as the JTI has to fulfil a few criteria to be

“deemed independent” and be allowed on the driving seat, amongst other to appoint an Executive Director.

The research organisations and academics present at the event were especially taken aback by the Commission’s intention to keep the overhead costs at no more than 20% of direct costs, under the specious argument that other JTI did the same. However, the JTI are not bound by the FP7 rules just so that their participation conditions can be adapted as much as possible to the industry; it therefore seems pointless to set common rules for all. On the brighter side, public organisations and SMEs will get 75% of their direct costs reimbursed.

As with all the other JTI, it seems that the partnership between the Commission and industry in the FCH JTI is on a bumpy road. It is to hope that the clouds will clear off in the future and that the way will be free for greener transport.

More information on the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen JTI, as well as the presentations from the launch event, can be found under: <https://www.hfpeurope.org/>

No future for Networks of Excellence?

As we have previously reported (see Synopsis 2007/9), the European Commission is currently assessing the role and impact of the Networks of Excellence (NoEs). This instrument was developed under FP6 to strengthen Europe’s scientific impact in specific fields, to tackle the fragmentation of European research and to create durable networks in these specific areas, according to the Commission. Under FP7, only very few calls for NoEs have been issued, attesting of a certain *malaise* at the Commission regarding this project type.

As a result, a group of experts appointed by Commissioner Potocnik and led by Manfred Horvat peered over the issues hampering the NoEs. According to the final draft of their report, which is dated of September 2008, the Expert Group made the following findings and recommendations:

- While the whole “NoE experiment” proved to be a valuable one, the NoE scheme has enjoyed only limited success, and only in certain research areas, towards the stated goal of creating integrated and sustainable “virtual centres of excellence”.
- The Expert Group rightfully places some of the burden for this very limited success on the Commission, which had defined the NoE concept only very ambiguously. This has prompted different Directorates within the Commission services to promote the NoE scheme in a very diverse way, leading to confusion amongst the involved participants. An annex in the report clearly outlines the somewhat contrasting views of the Commission on NoEs at different points in time.
- Based on their analysis of the stated “serious problems” encountered both in the conceptual (i.e. by the Commission services) and, as a result, in the implementation phase, the expert group recommends discontinuing the NoE scheme.
- However, a limited number of NoEs have successfully moved towards a more durable form of integration. In the experts’ opinion, these few networks should get opportunities for funding renewal, in order to reap at least some of the benefits from the “NoE experiment”.

To replace the NoEs, the experts propose a new scheme called the “Joint Research Initiatives” (JRI). These JRI would be oriented towards “long-term academic research” and bring together universities and research organisations into “slender alliances”, with the goal of creating “virtual institutes of manageable size” (3-7 partners). This new project type is seen by the experts as a complement to both the Joint Technology Initiatives and the European Research Council.

While it seemingly is a sensible suggestion to replace the NoEs by a better defined scheme, the JRI idea falls somewhat into the cracks between the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the Joint Programming initiative currently developed by the Commission. For example, the JRI would take up many elements that have been proposed for the implementation of Joint Programming. If the JRI would be the ideal instrument to implement this new programming initiative or if it could be part of the ERC in the future is currently unclear. However, the multiplicity of project types has often led to confusion among scientists participating in the Framework Programme, so it might be wiser to bury the NoEs without finding a successor for them...

The European Energy Research Alliance: a prime candidate for Joint Programming

On 27 October, ten research institutes in the field of energy research signed a formal declaration of intent to build up a European Energy Research Alliance (EERA). These institutes, amongst them the French CEA, the Italian ENEA and the German FZ Jülich, encompass an annual R&D budget of over €1 billion and have therefore the capacity to promote joint initiatives at European level. Indeed, one of the goals of EERA is to conceive and implement Joint Programmes of research in support of the priorities set forth by the European Commission in its November 2007 Strategic Energy Technology (SET) plan. The joint declaration was acclaimed by the Research Commissioner, Janez Potocnik as well as the Energy Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs; indeed, the primary focus of EERA is on the strategic and targeted development of next generations of energy technologies, as outlined in the SET-plan.

The founding members of EERA, with the support of EUROHORCS, EUA and the European Commission, will explore opportunities for the harmonisation of research programmes through a series of stakeholders' workshops, which will be held in late 2008 and early 2009. The EERA's ambitious plans foresee the launch of first joint programmes in 2009. Additional organisations will be invited to join the EERA until then, and a secretariat will be set up in Brussels.

The European Commission had proposed the new mechanism for Joint Programming of national research last summer (see Synopsis 2008/7); this proposal is currently discussed by the Council of the EU (see Synopsis 2008/8). With their joint declaration, the EERA founders place themselves in pole position to be one of the first Joint Programming initiatives to be launched. The forerunner, an initiative on Alzheimer proposed by the French Presidency, had received some support by the Member States, however a clear commitment from the scientific base in the field of neurodegenerative diseases for putting research efforts and resources together is lacking as yet. Since the energy initiative seems to have followed a more bottom-up path, it might well be that EERA will launch the first Joint Programme.

More information on the EERA, as well as the complete list of members, can be found under: www.eera-set.eu

French Presidency focuses on Public-Private Partnerships for research

On 15 October, the French Permanent Representation to the EU organised an event on the Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for research. The Head of Potocnik's cabinet, M. Kurt Vandenberghe, confirmed the growing importance of the topic within the European Research Area. Indeed, during his introduction, he mentioned the success achieved by the European Commission with the implementation of the European Technology Platforms (ETP). This first step allowed the development of the concept of the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI) confirming the current tendency of funding programmes rather than projects within the FP7.

The first part of the morning focused on theoretical studies on PPP. First, Mrs. Reinhilde Veugelers, Professor of Managerial Economics at the Catholic University of Leuven and member of the Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA) held a presentation on the general issues of PPP defined within the research policy as a long term relationship or as a service contract for infrastructure.

M. Jean-Luc Gaffard, Professor in economics at the University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, questioned the specificity of different models of PPP for European research as well as the market conditions and the nature of the innovation needed between the technological consortiums in order to be competitive.

During the second part of the event, three examples of good practice in PPP from the French national level were shared and relevant experiences of some European PPP were presented: CLEAN SKY, as an example of one of the JTI, was presented by Nick Peacock from Rolls ROYCE, who gave his personal perspective of the difficulties met for the set-up of the Joint Undertaking through the different views of the European Commission and the industry. Heinz

Olbers from the European Investment Bank (EIB) explained the structure and the concept of the new European PPP Expertise Centre (EPEC), which aims at helping the public sector to share experience, information and expertise on PPP and has been created in September 2008. The specific initiative of the centre, the so called ESFRI Risk Capital Facility (ERCF) was also presented.

Finally, the first findings and proposals for a governance model for a future Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) in the domain of new ICT was illustrated by Adrienne Perves, project coordinator of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's pilot project "ComplexEIT".

The presentations of the event can be provided by SwissCore upon request.

Partnership to strengthen African research capacity

On 2 October, the European Commission and the African Union (AU) released a joint statement on "Implementation of the EU-AU Partnership for Science, Information Society and Space". This statement aims at strengthening the African research capacity and research infrastructure in order for Africa to produce and use its own knowledge. The EU/Africa partnership in science, ICT and space was established at the second EU/Africa Summit in Lisbon in December 2007 and comprises 19 projects of which 6 are judged to be a priority.

Among these 6 early deliverable projects, two aim at improving the diffusion and use of Internet in Africa, two others will help develop AU scientific resources, one develops Africa's access to global monitoring and the last one is based on the enhancement of African access to the geospatial sciences.

According to the joint statement, these projects will be financed by FP7 as well as by other EC development programmes from DG DEV and AIDCO. Moreover, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the African Development Bank, the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and the Member States (through the Overseas Development Aid fund) will also participate. The implementation and the monitoring of the projects will involve both the European Union and the African Union by means of a permanent Mission of the African Union in Brussels and a European delegation in Addis Abeba.

A concertation meeting aiming at sharing perspectives and implementation procedures of the abovementioned joint statement will take place in Brussels on 10 December.

The Council conclusions on the implementation of the EU/Africa Joint Strategy can be downloaded following the link below:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/gena/100674.pdf

Publications

Kopernikus: a new name for an old initiative

Kopernikus, formally known as "GMES", Global Monitoring for Environment and Security, has launched its first package of earth observation services for Europe's environmental and civil security needs on 16-17 September at the Lille Forum.

The newly-named Kopernikus partnership focusing on geo-information services has been developed as a joint initiative of the European Commission and the European Space Agency (ESA) and has been offering its services in a "pre-operational phase" since 17 September. It aims at bringing together the already existing but uncoordinated resources in order to boost Europe's capacity to collect, develop, centralise and manage more effectively information among six interacting fields comprising: land, atmosphere, climate change, ocean, security and emergency. The services will be used to support policy efforts related to the abovementioned fields of activity, which are currently supported through a number of EU-funded research projects. Apart from public institutions and agencies, Kopernikus services will also be available to private sector companies willing to develop new products and its funding is assured until 2010.

A Communication that will unveil the next steps in developing the Kopernikus services, determine 2011-2012 funding and explain the way the partnership will be organised, is foreseen in November.

More information regarding the initiative can be downloaded following the links below:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e_i/news/article_7096_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/kopernikus/index_en.htm

New brochure and website on European Health Research

The European Commission's Directorate F of DG Research, in charge of research in the field of Health, has recently published a brochure entitled "European Research for a Healthier Future" that details the five main axes around which EU Health Research is organised:

- Genomics and systems biology
- Medical research
- Infectious diseases
- Public health
- Health biotechnology

The general information on these fields is complemented by topics of a more transversal nature, namely ethics, international cooperation and research by SMEs, as well as by examples of running projects. This nicely designed brochure will give interested people a good overview of what EU research is doing for the health of European citizens.

In addition to this brochure, a new website provides extensive access to all 680 Health projects funded under FP6 Life Sciences, Genomics and Biotechnology for Health and International Cooperation for Health. This site, called LifeCompetence, is the result of a project funded under FP6 and will certainly be an invaluable tool for scientists preparing projects under FP7 in those areas. Indeed, it allows looking for projects, but also for people or institutions that have participated in this thematic priority in FP6.

The Commission's brochure on Health research can be found under:

ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/european-research-2008_en.pdf

The database of FP6 Health and Life Sciences projects can be found under:

<http://www.lifecompetence.eu/>

◆ Innovation

World-class clusters shall foster innovation in Europe

The Directorate General Enterprise and Industry (DG ENTR) has published a Communication on cluster cooperation in Europe on 17 October. The Communication "Towards world-class clusters in the European Union" is one of the nine priorities of the broad-based EU innovation strategy, published and adopted in 2006. The Communication establishes links to other initiatives such as the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) or the Lead Market Initiative (LMI) which is dealing with the demand side of innovation (see Synopsis 2008/7).

According to the European Cluster Observatory there are currently about 2000 statistically significant clusters in Europe. Therefore the Commission concludes that Europe does not lack clusters, but it lacks world-class clusters.

The Communication stresses excellence, but also the trans-national dimension of clusters and could therefore be seen as relevant in the context of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). However, the EIT does not get mentioned with a single word in the text. In a nutshell, the Communication makes following recommendations for fostering cluster cooperation:

- To deepen the EU internal market by removing barriers for trade, mobility, free movement of knowledge and qualified staff as well as for access to finance across borders;
- To establish a European Cluster Policy Group to share intelligence about cluster policies and advise how to support the emergence and growth of world-class clusters in Europe;
- To launch a pilot scheme offering training programmes for cluster managers and preparing a quality label for cluster organisations;
- To improve the integration of SMEs into clusters in order to promote technology transfer and support the internationalisation of SMEs activities. To achieve this goal new tools will be developed in the CIP;
- To foster trans-national cooperation to match complementary strengths of clusters

To find the full text of the Communication please go to this link:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/innovation/doc/com_2008_652_en.pdf

For information on the European Cluster Observatory go to this website:

<http://www.clusterobservatory.eu/>

Europe Innova Conference: “Cluster Manager award 2008” goes to Switzerland

Also at the Europe Innova Conference in Lyon from 22 to 24 October cluster cooperation was one of the key topics. Other presentations covered the Lead Market Initiative (LMI), knowledge-intensive services, the role of creative industries for business, eco-innovation, knowledge transfer, life sciences, the protection of intellectual property and the importance of standardisation for design innovation. Demand driven innovation and in particular the role of lead users in the open innovation process were other issues, presented in a striking presentation given by Eric Von Hippel, Professor of Innovation Management at the MIT Sloan School of Management.

On the occasion of the conference Christoph Beer, manager of tcbe.ch-ICT Cluster Bern, was awarded with the Europe Innova Price “Cluster manager of the year 2008”. The award is honouring excellent performance in cluster management and shall prepare the grounds for the recognition of cluster management as a new profession (see also article on p. @@ in this Synopsis).

Europe Innova is part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programm (CIP):

<http://www.europe-innova.org/index.jsp>

More information on the tcbe.ch-ICT cluster can be found here:

<http://www.tcbe.ch/>

Food Cluster Initiative as a mix of EU funding

The Food Cluster Initiative, launched in February 2008, is the first example of how different EU funding instruments can be used in regional innovation projects. The initiative has been presented at the Open Days of the Committee of the Regions (6 to 9 October) and is based on the Food Innovation Network Europe (FINE). Early September the Commission published a practical guide on how funds from FP7, CIP and structural funds can be combined (see Synopsis 2008/8). Resources from these three funding instruments can be used in a complementary way by funding related activities or parts of a project at the same time. For instance, an activity could be supported by the CIP or FP7 and its follow-up could later be funded by structural funds or vice versa.

The next regional research and development cluster is scheduled for 2009 in the ICT sector under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP).

EU business R&D spending still on the up – will US Microsoft boost it even more?

According to the latest EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard, published on 15 October, European companies are increasing their research and development investments faster than

their counterparts in the US and Japan. The rise in R&D of European companies was 8.8% for 2007-2008, which means that Europe surpasses the US (rise of 8.6%) for the first time. Europe's industrial R&D growth rate was for the third time higher than Japan's. In total, 18 EU companies made it into the top 50, compared to 20 US and 9 Japanese. Switzerland's Roche made it even into the top ten. With an increase of its R&D investment of about 26% Roche is ranked 8th (15th in the previous year).

However, the three companies with the biggest investments in R&D are all American, with Microsoft on the top. Microsoft announced at the beginning of October that it will build up additional R&D centres in Europe, which could further strengthen Europe's private sector R&D. No concrete amount was mentioned, but Microsoft assured that several hundred jobs would be created in the three new research labs which will be built up in London, Paris and Munich and which will specialise in online research. The European Commission welcomed this announcement. Commission President José Manuel Barroso called it "a real vote of confidence for Europe and cutting edge European research."

The 2008 EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard can be downloaded from here:

http://iri.jrc.ec.europa.eu/research/scoreboard_2008.htm

Council conclusions on standardisation as a tool to disseminate innovation

On 25 September the Competitiveness Council adopted conclusions on standardisations and innovation, stressing the contribution that standardisation can make to innovation and competitiveness by facilitating access to markets, boosting interoperability and raising standards for users. Among others the Council also recalls the potential that standards could have for encouraging innovation in the services sector. Furthermore, the Council calls for more coordination in promoting European standards by the Commission and the Member States. Public research bodies and funding agencies for example should examine in their research projects whether the development of standards is adequately taken into account in order to facilitate the exploitation of the research results more effectively. The development of technology watch activities by the European Commission should support them.

All in all, the Council lists 29 measures. For more information refer to this document:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/103020.pdf

The Communication "Towards an increased contribution from standardisation to innovation in Europe" from 11 March 2008 can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/standards_policy/standardisation_innovation/doc/com_2008_133_en.pdf

Publications

R&D expenditure and personnel in Europe

In a compendium published at the beginning of October Eurostat gives an overview on the current situation of national expenditure and personnel in R&D in Europe. Most of the statistics are referring to 2006 and some include also Switzerland (data from 2004). With an R&D intensity of 1.84% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) the EU-27 is still on exactly the same level as in 2005 and significantly below the Lisbon target of 3% to be achieved by 2010.

The publication can be downloaded here:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-091/EN/KS-SF-08-091-EN.PDF

Czech Presidency's plans for education and training

On 1 January 2009, the Czech Republic will chair the Council of the European Union and the country has already unveiled its priorities in the areas of education, youth and sport.

In the field of education, the Czech Presidency has identified three key actions:

- Continuing the discussion on the future strategy of the Work Programme "Education and Training 2010", by outlining priority directions and visions in form of a long-term plan.
- Concentrating on the realisation of the "knowledge triangle" between education, research and innovation, by enhancing the partnership between the sphere of education, Vocational Education and Training (VET) and R&D on the one hand and enterprises on the other hand. Hopefully this action point will help pushing forward the EIT.
- Special focus on removing barriers to student mobility through the recognition of learning outcomes, the implementation of the national qualification frameworks and the strategic cooperation with Third Countries. Indeed, as the Czech Republic will chair the Bologna Board Meeting from January to June 2009, it is planned to work for the achievement of the 2010 goals and for the preparation of the materials defining the vision after 2010.

Regarding the youth field, the Czech Republic intends to put the stress on the implementation of the measures of the European Youth Pact as well as the removal of the obstacles to voluntary activities. These two objectives are both considered as being measures contributing to increase the employability of young people within the Lisbon goals for Growth and Jobs in 2010.

The document comprising the priorities of the Czech Council Presidency in the field of education can be downloaded from the Education Ministry's website following the link below: <http://www.msmt.cz/eu-presidency-2009/priorities>

New initiative to improve lifelong learning in Europe's universities

In an attempt to respond to the growing demand to raise people's employability, the European University Association (EUA) launched a charter for lifelong learning, designed to improve the provision of lifelong learning in Europe's universities on 25 October. The charter has been developed on the basis of a large consultation with more than 800 universities, 34 national Rector's Conferences as well as European stakeholder organisations. Ten commitments for lifelong learning have been recognized as important. Among them, these can be mentioned:

- Embedding concepts of widening access and lifelong learning in the institutional strategies
- Adapting study programmes to ensure that they are designed to widen participation and attract returning adult learners
- Strengthening the relationship between research, teaching and innovation in a perspective of lifelong learning

The charter also mentions that legal and financial frameworks should be provided by governments and regional partners to assist the universities in their efforts.

These actions will have now to be promoted at national and institutional level by EUA members and will be discussed during an informal meeting of EU education ministers at the end of November.

The Charter is available in English and in French:

http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/EUA_Charter_Eng_LY.pdf

http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/EUA_Charte_Fr_LY.pdf

Intercultural education is needed for migrant children's integration

That was the message delivered by the expert committee education and culture of the European Parliament as a follow up of the results of a study entitled "Intercultural education in schools", on

10 September, that was done in parallel with the Green Paper entitled "Migrant children and education: a challenge for EU education systems", issued in July (see Synopsis 2008/7).

The general context of this study (issued in April 2008) is the intensive international migration which leads migrant children to be discriminated against their native peers with regard to school achievement and access to higher education. The study analysing the cultural approach in teaching in six Member States (UK, France, Germany, Italy, Hungary and Sweden) reveals that 1) socio-economic conditions have an effect on academic success, 2) diversity and intercultural aspects are too often not respected in the national teaching systems, 3) the implementation of appropriate and effective policies needs good structural conditions and 4) the importance of teaching in the migrants' own language is not sufficiently taken into account in the Member States. Moreover, Comenius and Erasmus, which encourage student mobility, are qualified as too vague with regard to intercultural content of classes and courses. Thus, the study concludes that a focus on proactive integration including lessons in the children's mother tongues, and involvement of the parents in the process constitutes a key factor in success at school and integration for migrant children.

The full report on "Intercultural education in schools" can be downloaded following the link below: <http://www.pedz.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-ma/ep/08/EST20951.pdf>

Progress towards the e-skills strategy

As a follow up of the Communication on e-skills for the 21st century adopted in September 2007, including a long-term e-skills agenda and five key action lines aiming at facing a growing lack of e-skills in the coming years (see Synopsis 2007/7), a conference on European e-Skills 2008 was held in Thessaloniki on 9-10 October 2008.

The conference was an important step towards the implementation of a long-term e-skills strategy and some progresses regarding the achievement of the abovementioned goal have been recognised. Indeed, good progress was presented by employers in their ability to specify more easily their staffing requirements. Moreover, the multi-stakeholder partnerships are extending to organisations of all sizes, including SMEs. Finally, the launch of a European e-Skills and Careers portal is helping jobseekers find a job.

The future work to be done in 2009 revealed at the conference comprises the development of European ICT curriculum guidelines and the financial promotion for supporting a widespread use of e-learning. It also includes the encouragement of students to work in the ICT area.

More information regarding the European e-Skills 2008 Conference can be found following this link: www.e-skills-conference.org

Publications

LLP issued its 2009 call for proposals and launched the new Comenius Regio initiative

A general call for proposal for the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) with a general budget of €961 million was issued on 8 October. As a reminder, the priority of the LLP is to reinforce the contribution made by education and training to achieve the 2010 Lisbon goals for Growth and Jobs.

As a new action following the Communication on "Improving Competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools" issued in July (see Synopsis 2008/7), Comenius has a new regional dimension. On 3 November a conference launched the new lifelong education and training initiative called "Comenius Regio". It will have an annual budget of €16 million. This partnership aims at supporting participating regions in developing best practice, structured cooperation among the partner regions across borders and strengthening the European dimension in school education by offering European learning experiences to teachers and pupils. Comenius Regio partnerships consist of two "partner regions" where each partner

must involve the regional authority, at least one school and one local partner with a role in school from two countries participating in the LLP, where one is an EU Member State. The deadline of the call for proposals is foreseen for 20 February 2009 and the 27 Member States, Turkey as well as EEA countries are eligible.

More information regarding the call can be found following the link below:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/index_en.htm

More information regarding the activities that can be carried out in Comenius Regio can be found following the link below: http://ec.europa.eu/education/comenius/doc1002_en.htm

The Magazine of the Directorate General for Education and Culture

The periodical publication of DG EAC, named the Magazine, provides in-depth articles and reports on EU policies in the fields of education, training, youth, culture, languages, sport and civil society. It is available in six languages: DE, EN, ES, FR, IT, PL. The last issue focuses on the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

To subscribe, see: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/mag_en.html

SwissCore Küche

Swiss networking in Brussels: 16th SwissCore apéro

For its traditional networking apéro, SwissCore welcomed on 28 October more than 20 newly arrived and more established Swiss expats working in Brussels for European institutions, Swiss representations, lobby organisations or studying in Belgium as Erasmus students. SwissCore and the Swiss Mission to the EU presented their activities aimed at reinforcing 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 be active and network in the European capital.