

SwissCore Synopsis

November-December 2008

2008 / 10

◆ Seen from Brussels

- Recharging the batteries after the French power surge 2

◆ Research

7th Framework Programme – FP7

- Looking back on the ERC's second year of existence 2
- Commission wants to deepen joint research in metrology 3
- Bosnia Herzegovina associated to FP7 3

EU Research Policy

- The Council takes the lead on Joint Programming 4
- Full costing: a way to improve European Universities' financial sustainability? 5

Publications

- ACARE publishes the 2008 update of its Strategic Research Agenda 5

◆ Innovation

- What the stakeholders want from the EIT 6
- What is in the EU Economic Recovery Plan for research and innovation? 6
- Parts of the Lead Market Initiative will get implemented through the CIP 7

Publications

- Enterprise Europe Network Switzerland 8
- Media launch of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 8

◆ Education

- The Copenhagen Process considered a success six years after its start 8
- A new ranking system for the European higher education institutions? 9
- Erasmus Mundus II ready to start in January 2009 9
- European Youth Week 2008, setting the future of youth policy orientation 10

◆ SwissCore Küche

- SwissCore Seminar 2008 10
- Swiss Science Briefing 2008 on Systems Biology 11

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SwissCore - 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, <http://www.swisscore.org>

◆ Seen from Brussels

Recharging the batteries after the French power surge

As the Christmas holidays are approaching, the tiredness one can discern in the faces of the Member States representatives reflects the intense pace the French Presidency kept up in the last weeks, while stories about a Coreper meeting lasting for over 18 hours circulate in Brussels. Besides discussing several new initiatives for research and innovation within the frame of a Economic Recovery Plan (p. 6), the delegation from Paris managed to get Council conclusions on three out of the four remaining Commission proposals following on the ERA Green Paper, notably the Communication on Joint Programming (p. 4 and Synopsis 2008/7). At its December meeting, the Competitiveness Council (Council of Ministers) also gave its blessing to a new marine and maritime research strategy and to the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) space programme. The only blemish for the French research minister is the legal framework for European Research Infrastructures, which has been passed over to the upcoming Czech Presidency due to a lack of agreement – by the finance ministers, and on tax exonerations... As this has only little to do with research, the achievements in this field of a very energetic French Presidency could be considered a success.

In the meantime, the European Commission has not been idle: as if loaded with French (atomic) energy, it has tabled a proposal for a new Art. 169 initiative, EMRP (p. 3), and has started to tackle the tricky implementation of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). While many doubts remain as for what this flagship will look like in the end, some cornerstones have already been set (p. 6). The Commission also plans a series of new initiatives in the field of research, innovation and education for 2009:

- a Communication on university-business dialogue;
- a Green paper on promoting cross-border mobility of young people;
- a Communication on ICT R&D and Innovation;
- a European platform for action against cancer (including research);
- a proposal for a Commission initiative on Alzheimer (see also p. 4).

In addition, in the field of education, the Copenhagen Process has been considered a success (p. 8) and a call for tender for a multi-dimensional ranking system for universities and higher education institutions has just been issued by DG Education and Culture (p. 9). This step of the Commission in the thorny field of university ranking will certainly lead to strong reactions, once the system is in place.

Last but not least, Commission President Barroso decided on 3 December on a major reshuffle amongst the senior managers in the different Directorates-General (DG), which does (fortunately) not affect the research family DGs. The only notable change is the planned creation of a new DG for Energy by November 2009; as a result, the responsibility for the highly visible energy subject would be taken away from DG TREN (Transport and Energy).

With all this, one can only hope that the European elections in June 2009 will not lead to a lack of power and dropping energy for new endeavours amongst the EU institutions...

◆ Research

7th Framework Programme (FP7)

Looking back on the ERC's second year of existence

On 12 December, the second call for ERC Starting Grants was closed, with 927 submissions having been received for the "Life Sciences" domain. Added to the 463 proposals for Social Sciences and Humanities (27 November deadline) and the 1112 for Physical Sciences and Engineering, a total of 2503 proposals have been submitted for this call. This number is a far cry

from the over 9000 proposals that had submerged an ill-prepared ERC in the spring of 2007, following the announcement of the first ERC Starting Grant call (see Synopsis 2007/6). The measures taken by the ERC to reduce the flood of proposals in the second call have thus shown their effect; indeed, this time a full proposal will be evaluated in one stage instead of two, and the eligibility bracket has also been reduced (3-8 years after PhD instead of 2-9). This reduction in submission numbers is not only good news for the ERC Executive Agency, which has to handle three times less proposals, but also for the applicants, who can rejoice in a much higher success rate (expected at 10% instead of 3%) and enjoy a better evaluation process, as “emergency measures” and course corrections “en route” will most likely not be necessary this time.

A deluge of proposals had been anticipated for the first Advanced Grants call, issued at the beginning of the year, with predicted numbers reaching as high as 30'000. However, the response of the more advanced scientists remained decent, allowing an overall success rate of over 12% (see Synopsis 2008/4 and 2008/6). 275 proposals have been selected for funding, with 10% of these going to scientists working at Swiss host institutions. As the success rate of Swiss scientists remains at an average level (around 3%), the good numbers for Switzerland are mostly due to resident European “non-nationals”. Their percentage relative to the total number of grants for the country’s host institutions makes Switzerland a notable exception in the European landscape, where the countries’ nationals usually prevail amongst the grantees.

While the ERC can be pleased about the results of these calls, the institutional issues still affect the good functioning of the research funding agency: the hiring of the staff necessary to process the calls and the evaluations is behind schedule and three members of the ERC Scientific Council (ScC) need to be replaced as soon as possible (see Synopsis 2008/5). For the latter, an identification committee has been named in September, composed of four eminent personalities:

- Prof. Eero Vuorio (chair), Chancellor of the University of Turku, Finland;
- Prof. H  l  ne Ahrweiler, former President of the University of Paris I;
- Prof. Zita Ausrele Kucinskiene, Chair of Department at the University of Vilnius, Lithuania;
- Prof. Arnold Schmidt, emeritus professor of the University of Vienna.

At its first meeting in October, the identification committee has decided on a methodology and has asked the major European research organisations and funding agencies to provide names of candidates. The new appointments to the ScC are foreseen for early 2009.

Last but not least, the ERC has started working on its review pending in 2009; a precise methodology (albeit somewhat too detailed, see Synopsis 2008/8) has been prepared and independent experts should be nominated in January. Even if they start their work according to plan in February, time will nevertheless be short to deliver their report to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU before the European elections in June. It is therefore rather uncertain if the current institutional setup of the ERC, with an independent Scientific Council and an Executive Agency under the control of the European Commission, will be modified in 2010...

All the results of the ERC calls can be found under:

<http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=26>

More information on the identification committee can be found under:

<http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=156>

Commission wants to deepen joint research in metrology

On 3 December, the European Commission suggested to set up a new joint research programme under Article 169. Already two other programmes that exist under this Article of the Community Treaty have both launched their first calls in 2008: Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) and Eurostars.

The proposed programme would support joint research in the field of metrology, the science of measurement, bringing together 22 national metrology research programmes from a large number of Member States and countries associated to FP7. Metrology has various applications in very different fields such as health, security research, nanotechnology or environment.

The European research programme in the field of metrology (EMRP) is expected to be financed jointly by the 22 participating states with up to €200 million and through an expected Community

contribution of €200 million. It is foreseen that 22 out of the 32 Member States of the European Association of National Metrology Institutes (EURAMET) will join EMRP, including Switzerland which is represented by the Federal Office for Metrology (METAS). EURAMET is a non-profit organisation set up in Germany in early 2007. EURAMET has already gained experiences with joint calls through iMERA Plus, launched under the ERA-NET Plus scheme. Joint research projects under iMERA Plus have been launched in 2008 and are all running for three years. The European Commission's proposal will now be transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council, as research initiatives under Article 169 follow the co-decision procedure and therefore need the approval of both these institutions.

The EC proposal as well as information on EURAMET can be found here:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0814:FIN:EN:PDF>

<http://www.euramet.org/>

Bosnia Herzegovina associated to FP7

On 24 November, Bosnia-Herzegovina signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the European Commission, which allows scientists from this country to fully participate in FP7 from 1 January 2009 onwards. This makes Bosnia-Herzegovina the 12th country to be associated to the Framework Programme and the last of the Balkan States to join the European Research Area.

EU Research Policy

The Council takes the lead on Joint Programming

On 2 December, the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions on the Communication of the European Commission "Towards Joint Programming in Research: Working together to tackle common challenges more effectively" tabled in July (see Synopsis 2008/7). As one of the five initiatives of the European Commission that followed on the 2007 ERA Green Paper, this Communication proposes a new mechanism for Member States to develop common research programmes and to select at the highest level the research challenges to be jointly addressed.

In its conclusions, the Council stressed the following points:

- The instruments for the coordination of research programmes already existing in the Framework Programme like ERA-NET, ERA-NET+ and Art. 169 initiatives play an important role and should therefore be continued. This statement puts an end to the speculations about a termination of these schemes, which had been going around in Brussels in the last months.
- Similarly, the "older" inter-governmental programmes like EUREKA and COST should also continue irrespective of new Joint Programming initiatives.
- The whole process of Joint Programming should be led by the Member States, with the Commission facilitating the identification process and providing support, if needed.

With this last conclusion, Member States are indeed taking the lead on Joint Programming; in line with this, the role of the High-Level Group proposed by the Commission will be taken by a dedicated configuration of CREST, the Research Committee for Science and Technology, which is an emanation of the Council. The so-called High-Level Group for Joint Programming (GPC) will identify the themes for Joint Programming based on broad public consultation of the scientific communities. To underscore even more the leading role of the Member States, the Group will be chaired by a representative of the Presidency-in-office of the Council, rather than by the Commission. According to the GPC's mandate, the countries associated to the Framework Programme can be invited to participate in the group. The representatives in the GPC are to be nominated before the end of January 2009.

In order to accommodate the French Presidency, which had been strongly pushing this initiative, the Council also agreed to launch a pilot for Joint Programming on combating neurodegenerative diseases, and in particular Alzheimer's. The Commission is invited to table a proposal in order to start the implementation of such a pilot "as soon as possible in 2009". This point of the

conclusions will have allowed the French delegation to go back to Paris with more than just promises for their President, who is apparently at the origin of this initiative.

The Council's conclusions on Joint Programming can be found under:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/104458.pdf

Full costing: a way to improve European Universities' financial sustainability?

The European universities are prone to growing financial pressures due to the current global economic crisis coupled with rising costs and stagnation in public investments. To give a new insight on how higher education institutions could respond to these financial difficulties, the European University Association (EUA) with the support of DG EAC published a report entitled "Financially Sustainable Universities: Towards Full Costing in European Universities" on 13 November. The EUA recommends universities to implement full costing of all their internal and external activities to reinforce their financial sustainability. This report aims at providing an analysis of the current state of development of full costing in higher education institutions in Europe and also at identifying the drivers, benefits and obstacle in this process. In its work, the EUA demonstrates that full costing provides more autonomy and ensures better budget allocation and accountability, leading to a more trustful relationship between the national government, funding agencies and universities.

However, the study brings to light a number of obstacles hindering the development of full costing in higher education in Europe. According to the report, a lack of financial and advisory support from the national government is one of the main difficulties, as external support is essential in the development of full costing management tools. In addition, the major incentive for developing full costing methods is European and national competitive funding; however, as these usually do not cover the costs in their entirety, this type of funding might actually jeopardise the financial sustainability and independence of higher education institutions. The risk associated with competitive funding might actually deter universities from moving towards full costing.

To further investigate such issues, the current study will soon be complemented by another study focusing on universities' diversification of income streams (EUDIS).

EUA's report on full costing can be found under:

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

Publications

ACARE publishes the 2008 update of its Strategic Research Agenda

The Advisory Council for Aeronautics Research in Europe (ACARE) has published an addendum for 2008 for its Strategic Research Agenda (SRA). As the original SRA had been written in 2004, ACARE felt that this update was necessary in the light of the recent developments in the field. A full review of the ACARE SRA is foreseen in 2010 only. The ACARE SRA has served as a basis for the implementation of the Clean Sky Joint Technology Initiative (JTI); the current update might therefore be informative for scientists and officials dealing with this JTI, as well as for policy makers who want to get an update on the recent developments in the field of aeronautics.

The 2008 update of ACARE's SRA can be found under:

http://www.acare4europe.org/docs/ACARE_2008_Addendum.pdf

What the stakeholders want from the EIT

On 24 November, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) organised a seminar in Bratislava, inviting for the first time stakeholders from business and academia to gather their opinion on the format of the future Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC). More specifically the interaction between the various partners within a KIC was discussed during different workshops. Issues relating to co-allocation and to how KICs will give rise to new value chains beyond the interests of the KICs were also investigated. Discussions also centred on the KIC selection criteria, the definition of a key selection criteria and how the performance of the KICs could be measured. Further points concerned the question how to achieve a long-term involvement of industry in the EIT. Business in Europe still seems to be reluctant to participate in the EIT.

The outcome of the seminar will be taken into consideration by the EIT Governing Board when further developing the project. According to Martin Schuurmans, chair of the EIT Governing Board, a KIC will have a budget of about €50 to €100 million per year, of which only 25% will be provided by the EIT. Thus, three-quarter of the funding should be provided by other sources such as EU programmes (e.g. FP7, CIP), Structural Funds, industry, venture capital, investment banks, and a still to be established EIT Foundation. Apparently there is a consensus within the EIT Governing Board that the first topics for KICs will be the following ones: sustainable energy, mitigation and adaption of climate change, and future information and communication technologies. Schuurmans said that healthcare could become a theme for a KIC call later on. He also pointed out that a KIC can include non-technological research and that proposals for a KIC which cover all three above mentioned topics will be in favour. However, it is still possible that a KIC includes only one or two themes.

It is expected that a call for proposals for KICs will be published in April 2009 and will close in June. The selection of the first two or three KIC is due by the end of January 2010. Seen the rather short period for the submission of proposals, Schuurmans recommended that consortia start already now to write proposals, even before the call is launched. This statement supports very strongly the assumption that the abovementioned topics for KICs will be the final ones for the first call. However, it is rather unclear whether the Governing Board is independent enough to decide about the organisation of the first call and the evaluation of proposals on its own, and to which extent the European Commission will be involved in those processes.

At the beginning of December, the EIT started the recruitment process for its director by posting a vacancy note. The successful candidate has to be citizen of an EU Member State. The director will be responsible for the day to day management of the EIT and will give support to the Governing Board and the Executive Committee in their work. The closing date for application is 6 January 2009.

Three seminars dedicated to each of the three KIC topics will take place at the end of January 2009. In February a meeting between the Governing Board members and young researchers and entrepreneurs is planned and in March two experts meetings will take place to discuss some main topics of the EIT, such as the EIT Foundation which the Governing Board wants to create.

More information on the Bratislava seminar as well as some presentations can be found on the EIT website:

http://ec.europa.eu/eit/seminars_en.htm

The vacancy note for the recruitment of the EIT director can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/personnel_administration/working_senior_mgt_en.htm

What is in the EU Economic Recovery Plan for research and innovation?

In order to address the worsening economic situation, the European Commission presented a Economic Recovery Plan on 26 November. The plan proposes that EU Member States should foresee an overall fiscal stimulus of about €170 billion in order to stabilize their economies in the

short term. In addition, around €30 billion will be released at EU level, from the EU budget and from the European Investment Bank (EIB).

The Recovery Plan includes not only short term measures, but also initiatives to support innovation as a long term policy goal, in particular ways to increase private sector R&D investments. With this measure, the Commission hopes to avoid cuts in both public and private R&D budgets due to the financial crisis. The plan suggests partnerships between the public and the private sector and targets three industrial sectors: A “European green cars initiative” with a combined funding of at least €5 billion, a “European energy-efficient buildings initiative” worth €1 billion, and a “factories of the future initiative” estimated at €1.2 billion. It could be that the latter will build on the Manufacture EU European Technology Platform. The focus will be on enabling technologies, such as engineering technologies for adaptable machines and industrial processes, ICT and advanced materials. The Commission proposes that the “Green cars initiative” would not only combine funds from industry, from the Community and from Member States, but also from the European Investment Bank (EIB), which would provide loans to car producers and suppliers in order to finance innovation. From the Commission’s budget, about €2.1 billion from unspent budget lines could be used for the green cars initiative, the energy efficient building initiative, the factories of the future initiative as well as for the extension of high speed internet connections.

To provide help for SMEs, some proposals of the Recovery Plan will build on the Small Business Act (see Synopsis 2008/5), which has been adopted by the Competitiveness Council on 1 December. At this meeting, ministers also adopted conclusions on a strategy to enhance the number of world-class innovation clusters in Europe, based on the Commission communication of 17 October (see Synopsis 2008/9).

Faced with the threat of recession, the European Council agreed on 12 December on the proposed recovery package. Additionally, the European Council suggested to create a 2020 European Fund for Energy, Climate Change and Infrastructure (called “Marguerite Fund”) in partnership with national institutional investors. The European Commission hopes to reach an agreement on the Recovery Plan by the end of 2008, for which the approval of the Council and the European Parliament is needed.

The text of the communication “A European Economic Recovery Plan” as well as the press release and the conclusions of the European Council from 12 December can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/Comm_20081126.pdf

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/735>

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/104692.pdf

Parts of the Lead Market Initiative will get implemented through the CIP

Three new calls were issued under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) in November. One of them is a support action to the Lead Market Initiative (LMI), presented by the European Commission in December 2007 (see Synopsis 2007/9 and 2008/7). The LMI aims to foster the demand for innovative products and services in chosen areas through public procurement. The call under the CIP is part of the implementation of the LMI and aims at establishing trans-national networks of public procurers, in order to raise their knowledge about innovative solutions that are available or being developed in the following areas: construction, protective textiles, bio-based products, recycling, and renewable energies. Overall, these networks should raise the awareness of public procurers on their role in the innovation process and on their purchasing power.

The second call will implement four actions that have been developed within the framework of the Europe INNOVA initiative. Three actions concern the establishment of European Innovation Platforms, one for Clusters (Cluster-IP), one for Knowledge Intensive Services (KIS-IP) and one for Eco-Innovation (Eco-Innovation). The fourth action “Promotion of novel tools and service concepts for innovation support” will implement other outputs of Europe INNOVA under the CIP.

The third call finally will put into practice actions proposed by PRO INNO Europe. It should bring together innovation policy makers and inspire them to develop better policies and instruments, all of them in the same fields as in the second call described above: World-class clusters, innovation in services and support of eco-innovation. Besides that, the INNO-Partnering Forum will create a

platform for policy makers for mutual learning. Furthermore, the call includes a European Initiative for Excellence of Cluster Organisations and the organisation of a European Innovation week.

More information on the three initiatives, including the call text, can be found here:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/funding/files/themes_2008/calls_prop.htm

Publications

Enterprise Europe Network Switzerland

The Enterprise Europe Network is made of about 600 partners in over 40 countries. Launched in February 2008, it is an essential part of the EU Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP). Enterprise Europe Network is merging services that have been previously offered through the Innovation Relay Centres (IRC) and the Euro Info Centres (EIC). Companies can make use of the network when searching for information on EU legislation, funding opportunities or new business partners in other countries part of Enterprise Europe Network. The services of the network also include partner search within technology.

Partners of the network in Switzerland are Euresearch, OSEC and EPFL-Alliance. Their newly launched website is the Swiss access point to information and support for SMEs in Switzerland.

The Swiss and the European Commission website for Enterprise Europe can be accessed on:

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ch/>

http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm

Media launch of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation

On 5 December, the European Commission launched the communication campaign for the European Year 2009 with the slogan “Imagine – Create - Innovate”. 2009 has been designed as the year of creativity and innovation. The year will be officially inaugurated at a ceremony in Prague on 7 January.

More information on upcoming activities can be found on a newly created website dedicated to the European Year 2009: <http://create2009.europa.eu/>

Education

The Copenhagen Process considered a success six years after its start

At the close or the informal Education Council held in Bordeaux on 25-26 November, the education and training ministers adopted the “Bordeaux communiqué” as a result of the meeting. The participants agreed that the Copenhagen Process has successfully contributed towards reaching the challenges in vocational education and training (VET) in the context of the Lisbon strategy. The European Commission welcomed the communiqué as a “major step” in European cooperation for VET.

Since the Copenhagen Declaration of 2002, when the education ministers decided for the first time to cooperate more closely in this field, reviews of progress were conducted every two years. This has taken place in Maastricht in 2004, in Helsinki in 2006 and now in 2008 under the French Presidency in Bordeaux.

The main message of the communiqué is the strengthening of the links between VET and the labour market. This new target follows on from DG Employment’s initiative called “New skills for new jobs” from November 2007 which aims at adjusting and updating skills for the job market.

The Bordeaux communiqué summarises the progresses made but also set a list of action priorities for 2008-2010. The main goals include the adoption and implementation of the European credit

transfer system for VET (ECVET) and the European quality assurance reference framework for VET (EQARF). Recommendations on the establishment of these two initiatives were proposed by the Commission in April 2008 (see Synopsis 2008/4) and are now debated by the European Parliament and the Council. The formal adoption of these two recommendations is expected at the beginning of 2009.

The informal Council also provided the opportunity for the ministers to discuss the principles set out in the charter for lifelong learning published in October by the European University Association (EUA) (see Synopsis 2008/9).

Information about the results of the informal Council can be found:

http://www.ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-11_2008/PFUE-26.11.2008/resultats_de_la_reunion_des_ministres_de_l_enseignement_professionnel_19121

The Bordeaux Communiqué can be downloaded under

http://www.ue2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/1126_informelle_resultats/Bordeaux_Communique_EN.pdf

The Council resolution of 15 November 2007 on “New skills for new jobs” initiated by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:290:0001:0003:EN:PDF>

A new ranking system for the European higher education institutions?

Following the discussions at the conference “International comparison of education systems: a European model?” held in Paris on 13-14 November, the European Commission’s DG for Education and Culture has issued a call for tender for ranking EU universities on 11 December. The aim is to develop a multi-dimensional university ranking system with global outreach, to make it possible to compare and benchmark similar institutions within and outside Europe, both on the level of institution and of study fields. This initiative builds on earlier EU-funded work on mapping the different strengths and missions of universities (typology). The first results of the planned pilot project are expected in 2011.

The project, to be funded by the Commission up to a sum of €1.1 mio, will consist of two phases. From May 2009 to the end of 2009, a multi-dimensional ranking system for higher education institutions should be designed, in consultation with stakeholders. In the second phase, from January 2010 to the end of May 2011, the feasibility of the multi-dimensional ranking system will be tested on a representative sample of no less than 150 higher education and research institutions. The sample will focus on the disciplines of engineering and business studies and should have a sufficient coverage, both geographically (inside and outside of the EU) and institutionally (institutions with different missions). The German Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung (CHE) will certainly play an important role in the achievement of the Commission’s goals, as the CHE’s ExcellenceRanking project had been endorsed by the EU Education Commissioner Jan Figel in October 2008.

Depending on the outcome of the project, recommendations will be made on how this ranking system could eventually be implemented at European and global level. The deadline of the call for tenders is 27 February 2009.

All documents of the call for tenders can be downloaded at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/calls/tenders_en.html

The programme of the conference in Paris can be found under the following link:

http://www.ue2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/import/1113_comparaison_systemes_educatifs/programme_conference_fr_en_de.pdf

Erasmus Mundus II ready to start in January 2009

Following the adoption by the European Parliament (on 21 October) of a report by Marielle De Sarnez on the European Commission’s initial proposal of 12 July 2007 (see Synopsis 2008/6), the Erasmus Mundus II programme has finally been adopted by the Education Council of the EU on 20-21 November. The overall budget of €950 million for the years 2009-2013 is higher than the planned budget in order to respond to the growing demand for this programme. The second phase of Erasmus Mundus provides an easier access to the programme by a fairer spread of third country students and simplified procedures for visa applications. To facilitate exchanges,

language learning is among the top priorities and this objective should be fulfilled by offering curricula comprising the use of at least two European languages. The programme foresees to increase the number of grants as well as cooperation with higher education establishments in third countries. Bursaries amount for Master and PhD students from Third Countries should be higher than for Europeans in order to promote European centres of excellence and to attract students and lecturers from foreign universities. Swiss participation is foreseen only if a bilateral agreement with Switzerland is concluded (art. 9, §d of the EC proposal).

The EC proposal adopted by the European Parliament and the Council can be downloaded following the link below: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/com395_en.pdf

European Youth Week 2008: setting the future of youth policy orientation

From 2-9 November, the fourth European Youth Week took place in 31 countries including over 500 events throughout the EU and beyond.

In Brussels, on 5 November, seven projects that had received funding from the “Youth in Action” programme were awarded on the occasion of the “European Youth Celebrations”. Moreover, two hundred delegates from the national youth councils together with stakeholders and policy makers discussed the “future challenges” for youth policy during a session in the European Parliament. Indeed, a set of suggestions for the review of the political framework and the future of youth policy orientation, foreseen in spring 2009, was established. Among these suggestions that will be taken into consideration by the European Commission, young people highlighted the need to improve the visibility of the “Youth in Action” programme and stressed the necessity to remove legal and bureaucratic obstacles for youth’s full participation in society. They also proposed that the EU should nominate 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering and establish a Europe “V-card” to give more recognition to every volunteer.

More information regarding the awarded projects can be found following the link below:

<http://www.youthweek.eu/best-youth-projects/winning-projects.html>

The final conclusions regarding the “Future Challenges for young people” can be downloaded following the link below:

http://www.youthweek.eu/fileadmin/Content/Images/3_0_In_Brussels/EYW2008_Conclusions_en.pdf

SwissCore Küche

SwissCore Seminar 2008

This year, the SwissCore Seminar took place in Brussels on 20-21 November. More than 40 Swiss participants could deepen their knowledge on the new schemes and implementation practicalities of FP7 as well as of other European initiatives structuring the European Research Area.

Officials from the European Commission presented the current state of FP7 and detailed the latest steps in the following topics: the setting up of the Research Executive Agency and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the success of Swiss researchers in the Calls of the European Research Council, the Commission’s Communication on Joint Programming (see p. 4), and the discussions with European institutions concerning their cost accounting in regard to the certified methodologies allowed by the Commission. Detailed insight was also given into the project evaluation procedures during the workshop that preceded the seminar.

The second day focused on other funding mechanisms than FP7 like EUREKA and its new initiative Eurostars, the ones from the European Science Foundation (ESF) and from COST.

As usual, the SwissCore Seminar gave the participants the opportunity to discuss and address questions directly to the experts from the European Commission.

The programme and the presentations can be found on SwissCore’s website:

http://www.swisscore.org/fs_events.htm



Impressions from the SwissCore Seminar 2008. Top right: Giorgio Clarotti, European Commission; bottom left: Jack Metthey, European Commission.

Swiss Science Briefing 2008 on Systems Biology

On 27 November, SystemsX.ch, a new Swiss research consortium of eight universities and three research institutions in Systems Biology was presented in Brussels. Professor Ruedi Aebersold, a pioneer in the field of Systems Biology, demonstrated the importance of the organisation and scientific strategy of this Swiss-wide initiative to tackle tomorrow's biological and medical challenges to the public of the Swiss Science Briefing 2008. Daniel Vonder Mühl, Managing Director, highlighted the structure of SystemsX.ch which is financed on a matching funds basis by the Swiss Federal State and by the budget of the Swiss Cantons going to the partnering universities and research institutes. This example of joint programming at the level of a small country like Switzerland was discussed with Robert-Jan Smits from the European Commission in the context of its recent Communication on Joint Programming at European level, an initiative that is currently being discussed in the Council of the EU.

The panel discussion following the presentations allowed the public to engage into the debate and to share their own national experiences with the setting up of joint programmes as well as their ideas on joint programming.

The programme and the presentations can be found on SwissCore's website:

http://www.swisscore.org/fs_events.htm



Impressions from the Swiss Science Briefing 2008. Speakers: Ruedi Aebersold and Daniel Vonder Mühl, SystemsX.ch, Robert-Jan Smits, European Commission.

The SwissCore team wishes you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year 2009.

