

# SwissCore Synopsis

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### **Brussels is in for a hot summer...**

The warm month of June was mainly characterised by the aftermath of the European elections, held on 4-7 June. The results show that the right still has the upper hand in the European Parliament, putting the current Commission President José Manuel Barroso in the pole position to become the leader of the upcoming European Commission, which will be in office from 2009 till 2013. The hot question remains however, should Mr. Barroso be officially appointed before the results of the Irish vote on the Lisbon Treaty are known (vote on 2 October), or should he be put on hold until then? Moreover, discussions around the other planned new high-level posts foreseen by the Lisbon Treaty, the Council President and the High Representative, will most likely create some heat in the coming months.

The newly elected European Parliament will sit for the first time on 14 July, and there is already a heated debate on who should be elected on that day as President for the coming years. The members of the different Committees should be known by 20 July, and the repartitions of the chairmanships will also keep the water boiling. It will be interesting to discover the composition of the Committee in charge of research; one of their first agenda items will most likely be the review of the European Research Council, as the report from the appointed experts is foreseen for the summer (see Synopsis 2009/2).

Although the names of the future Commissioners are not yet known, it seems that some of the incumbents will stay on. It is rumoured here in Brussels that Commissioner Janez Potocnik will stay in the new crew, but that he might trade his current Research portfolio for a more prestigious one, like Energy or Enterprise and Industry. Changes are currently happening not only at the Commission itself, but also at DG Research, where we have witnessed the departure of two Deputy Director Generals within the last two months. Daniel Jacob will move to DG ADMIN, while Zoran Stancic will take up the post of Deputy Director General at DG INFSO. The latter change could indeed be beneficial for FP7, as more interactions between the two DGs could result from it. Moreover, the collaboration between DGs will be encouraged by the Swedish Presidency who just took over, on 1 July, the Presidency of the European Union for the next sixth months. One of their priorities has been put on improving the cooperation between research, innovation and education (p. 4).

The Nordic model pupil is also expected to give some good input to the EU innovation policy. The "Dossier" on innovation will throw some light on the preparation of the European Plan for Innovation, foreseen to be published at the beginning of 2010, at this time already feeding the new Lisbon Strategy with hopefully substantial ideas (p. 8). In this context, the SwissCore's Experts' Lunch on Innovation, on 24 June, launched a debate on how to foster innovation most efficiently, giving an input to the ongoing preparation of the EU innovation plan and taking Switzerland as an example of best practice (p. 11).

The Swedish Presidency communicated as main priority for education the further development of European cooperation in education and youth as well as the promotion of integration of migrants. As challenge for the coming years, access to new technology and culture will have to be encouraged. The aim of the Presidency is to help promote a creative generation and highlight the need for culture at school, the potential of new media and the related challenges.

With all this, it seems that the heat will stay in Brussels for a while, if not for real, then at least in the figurative sense...

### **Dossier on financial matters: Flat-rate for indirect costs fixed until 2013**

In June, the European Commission has decided on two financial issues under FP7 regarding the indirect cost flat-rate and the average personnel costs. No decision has yet been taken on a third issue, the requirement to place FP7 pre-financing on an interest-bearing account. We will report on these three issues here:

#### ***Flat-rate for indirect costs***

As a reminder, the FP7 Rules for Participation include a special flat-rate for indirect costs for non-profit bodies, secondary and higher education establishments, research organisations and SMEs, if they are unable to identify their indirect costs with certainty. This flat-rate was set at 60% by the European Parliament during the debate on the FP7 proposal, in order not to penalise universities that had been using the Additional Cost (AC) model under FP6. This cost model granted them 100% of the costs, plus 20% overhead. With the 75% cost reimbursement under FP7, the overhead had to be set at 60% to match the conditions under AC. In order to incentivise the institutions using the flat-rate to move towards full costs, it was foreseen that the Commission would reduce the flat-rate to “not less than 40%” in 2010, based on an estimation of the real indirect costs incurred by these institutions. After an analysis of the overheads of universities, the Commission came to an estimation of about 67%; a reduction of the flat-rate therefore could then only be motivated by the incentive value it would have. After a long reflection time, the Commission finally decided on 8 June to leave the flat-rate for indirect costs for the aforementioned FP7 participants at 60% until 2013. While good news for many universities, this decision nevertheless reduces their incentive to move towards full costs. This debate will certainly arise again in the adoption phase of FP8...

#### ***Average personnel costs***

Hailed as one of the simplifications introduced in FP7, the use of average personnel costs has proved to be a nightmare thus far. Indeed, in order to use such a calculation method for personnel costs, the Commission services required beneficiaries to request a “Certificate on the Methodology for Average Personnel Costs (CoMAv)”. The CoMAv submitted to the Commission were all found to be too imprecise to be accepted, as the deviation from actual personnel costs could not exceed 5%. This limit was difficult to reach, especially for beneficiaries with a lot of participations in the Framework Programme. On 23 June, the Commission has decided that deviations of up to 25% would be acceptable, provided the beneficiary has participated in at least four FP6 projects and received over €375'000 for each of these. This relaxation of the necessary precision of the methodology will allow more beneficiaries to use the CoMAv and thus lead to (at least some) simplification of FP7 participation.

#### ***Interest-bearing accounts***

While the two previous issues have been solved to the better, a third financial issue crept up during the last few months. It started when the officials of the European Research Council (ERC) requested from institutions hosting ERC grantees to set up separate interest-bearing accounts for these grants. Non-compliance with this “rule” would lead to an increase in the number of reporting periods, to the dismay of both the researchers and the host institutions. Exceptions were only granted when the beneficiaries were able to provide evidence of a national law preventing them to set up interest-bearing accounts. The institutions’ “usual accounting practices”, otherwise often respected, were completely ignored in this case.

Unfortunately, this problem has recently been spreading beyond the ERC and has found its way into the Marie Curie programme. While in the case of the ERC the measure could somewhat be explained by the sheer size of the grant, the amount of pre-financing for individual fellowships in the People programme does not seem to justify such a drastic approach. DG Research’s legal services are currently examining the case, as letters of complaint have been sent to the Commission from several research institutions and questions are arising if beneficiaries of

“regular” FP7 projects should also be asked to generate interest. As even the Financial Regulations and the Implementing Rules do not seem to provide more clarity on this question, the jury is out on what will be the final outcome...

### **Full autonomy reached by the Research Executive Agency**

On 15 June, the Research Executive Agency (REA) officially reached its full autonomy. The budget and the financial responsibility are now transferred from the European Commission to the newly established body (see Synopsis 2008/1). As a consequence, some delay in payments might have occurred between mid-May and the end of June.

The REA is located in Brussels at Place Rogier (Covent Garden building) and will become the biggest of the sixth existing EU executive agencies with a planned staff of 558 by 2013. At this stage, the organisation is still hiring staff, but neither national seconded experts nor Swiss citizens are eligible. The staff profile is currently composed of 75% contractual agents and 25% temporary agents with a maximum of 27 seconded from the Commission.

The agency will control a budget of €6.5 billion, which represents around 12% of FP7 budget. Although FP7 runs until 2013, the REA is expected to remain in place until 2017 in order to manage projects funded during FP7.

The autonomy of the second Executive Agency for Research implemented for the European Research Council (ERCEA) is expected for 16 July 2009.

The website of the Research Executive Agency can be consulted under:

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/rea/>

The current organisation chart can be downloaded under:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/rea/pdf/organigramme\\_web.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/rea/pdf/organigramme_web.pdf)

### **Will COFUND finally take off?**

*By Frédérique Zehnder-Mérot, Scientific Collaborator for Mobility, Euresearch Head Office, Berne,*  
The Individual Fellowships (IF) are probably the best business card of the PEOPLE specific programme of FP7. They are synonymous of mobility, lifelong training and interdisciplinarity. Every researcher in Europe knows them, especially the Intra-European Fellowship (IEF). While the main objectives of the IF are noble (to make research careers more attractive, to give researchers decent working conditions, to encourage researchers to stay in Europe, etc.), they also represent a certain administrative burden for the European Commission (EC).

As the action COFUND (Co-funding of Regional, National and International Programmes) was launched, it was expected that the national funding bodies and main universities would seize this opportunity to make their fellowships programmes more attractive and, somehow, divert the researchers from submitting for an IF. But COFUND has not achieved the expected result so far: the participation of national funding bodies is very low and only 10 Member States and 2 Associated Countries have participated in the last call.

In order to improve the dissemination in the countries and help COFUND take off, some measures are foreseen by the EC, such as additional promotional material, stakeholders' meetings and possible increase of budget. A mid-term review of COFUND is also planned in 2010.

The 3rd call for COFUND planned at the end of this year (with a deadline for submission in February 2010) will be decisive and show whether this action will be able to find a place among its peers.

## **EU Research Policy**

### **New EU Presidency: Swedish priorities in research**

Economy and Employment as well as Climate are mentioned as the two priorities of the new Swedish EU Presidency. These topics will partly be tackled by concrete plans for research. In order to help the economic recovery, the Presidency wants to contribute in a better use of R&D

resources, mainly at national level. In that context and as a follow-up to the previous French and Czech Presidencies, Sweden will contribute to the discussion concerning the Joint Programming (JP). Sweden hopes to reach a Council conclusion on JP in December, even if it seems a bit optimistic as the inputs from the High-Level Group on JP (GPC) are planned only for November. Resulting from the French initiative on Alzheimer, a first Council recommendation is expected on neurodegenerative diseases in September, currently in inter-service consultation.

As other follow-up to the ERA initiatives, the European Partnership for Researchers will be promoted and a Communication on Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) is expected for September in which not only PPP in research will be tackled. Additionally an assessment of the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI) is also under preparation.

The Presidency will also focus on the drawing of the future Framework Programme by means of an expected Council conclusion about the ICT strategy for Europe, tackling the Future and Emerging Technologies (see article p. 5). Concerning discussions for the future, an expert group for the interim evaluation of FP7 will be set up at the end of 2009. A call for experts has been sent to the Member States and Associated Countries. In that context, a consultation of the FP stakeholders is to be expected in spring 2010, while a consultation on simplification is currently ongoing in order to prepare a Communication on that topic announced for the first half of 2010.

In order to promote a better coordination between research, innovation and education with the aim at strengthening European Competitiveness, the Presidency will also debate on the Knowledge Triangle and the governance of the European Research Area (ERA). A Council resolution on ERA and two innovation policy papers are expected during the next months (see Dossier p. 8).

Many events will relate to these priorities for which information is to be found on the Swedish Presidency website.

The Swedish Presidency website: [www.se2009.eu](http://www.se2009.eu)

### **The Commission proposes to boost the ICT FET scheme with “flagship initiatives”**

After publishing a general ICT strategy in March (see Synopsis 2009/3), DG INFSO of the European Commission has tabled on 4 May a Communication outlining a more detailed strategy specifically for the Future and Emerging Technologies (FET) part of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Theme in FP7. Created in 1989, the FET scheme funds exploratory and interdisciplinary research in new ICT technologies and their applications to problems of other scientific fields. As one of the first exploratory research programme, it is the precursor of both the New and Emerging Science and Technology (NEST) scheme created under FP6, and the European Research Council (ERC).

In the light of the current crisis and of FET’s past success (which is nicely documented in the Communication), the Commission proposes the following measures:

#### Reinforce FET under the ICT Theme:

- Increasing the FET budget in FP7 by 20% in the period 2011-2013;
- Together with the national funding agencies, create best conditions for high-risk research in Europe and encourage the research community to develop common European research agendas;

#### Launch FET flagship initiatives:

- Define and launch at least two FET flagship initiatives by 2013;

#### Engage in joint programming and FET ERA initiatives:

- Launch three to five joint calls with Member States in FET using ERA-NET/ERA-NET plus initiatives;

#### Increase young researchers’ engagement in FET research:

- Intensify participation of young researchers in FET research and encourage them to lead projects;

#### Foster faster capitalisation of scientific knowledge and speed up innovation:

- Invite the research community and industry to cooperate more intensely within ICT-related European Technology Platforms;
- Implement initiatives to support high-tech, research-intensive SMEs;

- Continue the participation of FET in the Open Access pilot scheme;

*Facilitate collaborations with global research leaders and attract global talents to Europe:*

- Engage with non-European funding agencies (USA, China, Russia) to establish mechanisms to support research collaborations and build alliances.

With these proposed measures, it appears that DG INFSO expects to build on the past successes of the FET scheme while increasing its visibility within the Framework Programme. While some of the actions are rather vague (e.g. those for young researchers and for SMEs) and others trivial (FET budget increase), the main novelty in this Communication is the proposal to fund large FET ICT flagship initiatives. In order to fund such initiatives, DG INFSO states that “cooperation with other FP7 Themes” would be required.

In this context, it is striking that EPFL’s Blue Brain project is explicitly mentioned in the Communication, along with the Virtual Physiological Human Initiative, a Network of Excellence under FP7. It seems that the Commission already has an idea which initiatives could be launched as flagships until 2013...

The Commission’s strategy for FET can be found under:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0184:FIN:EN:PDF>

### **The EU takes action against cancer**

On 26 June, the European Commission published a Communication proposing a new “European Partnership for Action against Cancer”. This proposal includes public health measures like cancer screenings, dissemination of good practice in treatment, but also more coordination and cooperation in cancer research. In the first two calls of FP7, around €750 million have been devoted to cancer research, but the Communication asserts that most research in this field is undertaken at Member State level, and, hence, “fragmented”.

To achieve a better coordination of all these areas, the Commission proposes to create a large stakeholder forum in the third quarter of 2009, including all types of organisations. Moreover, four Stakeholder Working Groups for the areas of prevention, healthcare, research and information & data would work towards a final implementation report, to be tabled in 2013. These working groups would be supervised by a Steering Group and assisted by the Partnership Secretariat. Yearly plenary meetings of the Forum with reports from the working groups would ensure knowledge transfer, while a final report to the Council of the EU and the European Parliament would allow institutional support.

While this Communication is somewhat reminiscent of Nixon’s historical “War on Cancer” law of 1971, it is unclear at present what concrete measures will finally be taken, especially in the field of research. Indeed, the stated aim of coordinating one third of all cancer research in Europe by 2013 seems to go along the usual research policy line of the Commission, namely reducing the “fragmentation” of nationally funded research. Without being mentioned in the Communication, the idea of Joint Programming in cancer research quickly comes to mind...

The Commission Communication on a European Partnership against cancer can be found under:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0291:FIN:EN:PDF>

### **Contract signed for the feasibility study concerning EU supplementary pension fund**

Following a call for tender published in October 2008, the European Commission finally signed a contract for a feasibility study on supplementary pension fund addressing the issue of EU researchers’ carriers on 10 June. Based in Brussels, Hewitt Associates was awarded the €285,000 contract out of seven applicants on the basis of quality, legal requirements, management of the study and resources. Hewitt Associates already conducted previous studies for the EC on mobility of workers. The company will now be asked to “study the legal, technical and financial requirements for setting up a pan-European pension fund for EU researchers” within existing legislation under the second pillar of pension provision such as the EU Directive on the activities of Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provision (IORP). Results are

expected by May 2010 while a conference on researchers' carriers will be held under the Belgium Presidency in the second half of 2010.

The Call for Tenders can be found under:

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/dgs/tenders/rtd-2008\\_s190-251056\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/dgs/tenders/rtd-2008_s190-251056_en.cfm)

You can consult the blog of Commissioner Potocnik on this topic:

<http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/potocnik/a-pension-as-mobile-as-any-researcher/>

## **Publications**

### **New publication describing the preparation of EU Framework Programmes**

A new publication has just been released by the Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems, VINNOVA. Its author Dan Andrée, Special Adviser at the Swedish Ministry for Education and Research, describes the intricate mechanisms to come to decisions on the form and contents of a Framework Programme. This report is the first of four studies and focuses on the European Union Framework Programmes while the three other studies will deepen the prioritisation mechanisms in USA, China and Japan. VINNOVA strongly believes that understanding the mechanisms that contribute to shape priority settings in public financing of research and development is a key knowledge. The agency hopes therefore that other institutions will find the project useful for other policy developments, especially as the second half of 2009 and the first half of 2010 will be crucial for inputs, by means of the interim evaluation of FP7 and its possible mid-term review.

The publication from Dan Andrée can be downloaded on the following website:

<http://www.vinnova.se/In-English/Publications/Products-hidden/19109/>

### **EUA report on the interaction between academia and industry in doctoral studies**

On 16 June, the European University Association (EUA) published the final report of the DOC-CAREER project, which examined the partnership between industry and academia in doctoral studies and the further career of scientists. The study finds that excellence in research is paramount for the success of such partnerships at doctoral level, while the benefit of transferable skills was more controversial. Indeed, while such skills are important for both academic and industry careers, there is less a consensus if they should be a structural element of doctoral education. The question of these transferable skills is nevertheless important, as the report supports the general statement that 50% of current doctoral holders are employed outside academia. The report further addresses many other aspects (like IPR issues) and will certainly be useful for university management when designing and promoting industry partnerships in doctoral education.

The report of EUA can be found under:

[http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user\\_upload/files/Publications/DOC-CAREERS.pdf](http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/DOC-CAREERS.pdf)

### **COST open call**

On 27 June, an open call for proposals for European Cooperation in the field of Scientific and Technical research (COST) was published in the Official Journal of the European Union. COST does not fund research itself, but rather supports networking activities such as meetings, conferences, short-term scientific exchanges and outreach activities. It is often seen as an ideal instrument to support the sometime lengthy preparations for a Framework Programme project. COST will fund such networking activities in all fields of science; interdisciplinary proposals are particularly welcome.

The full call text can be found under:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:147:0026:0027:EN:PDF>

### **Dossier: A look into the future of EU Innovation policy**

As a follow up of the 2006 Communication “Putting knowledge into practice: A broad based innovation strategy for the EU”, the Competitiveness Council of December 2006 decided on nine strategic priorities for innovation actions at EU level: Intellectual Property Rights; Standardisation; Public procurement; Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI); Lead markets; European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT); Clusters; Innovation in services and Risk capital markets. For almost all of these issues, initiatives have been put into practice or Communications have been published, e.g. on standardisation or clusters (see Synopsis 2008/9).

In this context, a (hopefully) important Communication will be published by the European Commission at the end of July 2009. The Communication will assess the above mentioned broad-based innovation strategy, launched in 2006 during the Finnish EU Presidency. Additionally, the publication will entail staff working documents on innovation in services, effectiveness of public innovation support and financing of innovation in SMEs. Included in the Communication will also be the mid-term review of the Lead Market Initiative (LMI), a key element of the EU innovation strategy and an example of the demand-driven innovation policy (see Synopsis 2007/9 and 2008/10). Most likely the Communication will not directly touch the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), for which an interim evaluation is ongoing and a mid-term review is foreseen in 2010.

The mentioned Communication will take stock of innovation policy development of the last few years both at national and Community level. Based on this, it will provide some first inputs to future EU innovation policy framework, taking also into account the latest statistical evidence. Fortunately, this year’s publication of the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) disclosed that the gap between Europe and the US continues to narrow, and that some EU countries progressed. However, according to the EIS, substantial differences remain, particularly in business investments in innovation, which is still too low in Europe (see Synopsis 2009/1).

In order to accelerate the progress in innovation, the December 2008 European Council called for a new European Plan for Innovation. The preparation of this plan is one of the major initiatives of DG Enterprise and Industry for the second half of 2009. It will be interesting to see to which extent the ideas proposed in 2006 under the Finnish Presidency will be kept and where adaptations will be made. Not by sure chance, the preparation of the new Innovation Plan will take place during the Swedish Presidency of the EU. That way, the other EU innovation champion apart from Finland will get the opportunity to shape the future EU innovation policy. Already in the last couple of weeks, the Swedish Presidency took advantage of this and held some events related to innovation and research policy, with many more to come during the summer. According to the message spread at those events, EU innovation policy needs to be renewed. In particular it should take more into account non-technological aspects as well as societal challenges, also often referred to as the “grand challenges”. In this context the question was raised how Joint Programming could feed the Lead Market Initiative in the future.

The publication of the new EU innovation strategy should be expected not earlier than at the beginning of 2010. One of the aims of the Innovation Plan is to give a substantial input to the new Lisbon Strategy (the old one will expire in 2010) and to gather a holistic view on all existing EU initiatives in the field of innovation and research. Therefore, an inter-service group within the Commission is involved in the preparation of the content. In September 2009, a business panel mandated by the Commission will give further inputs to the Innovation Plan. The panel is currently sharing its ideas on a website which is open for comments and contributions.

In preparation of this European Plan for Innovation, the Commission already published a staff working document on design as a tool for user-centred innovation in spring 2009 (see Synopsis 2009/4). In the same context, a public consultation on the 2009 European Year of Creativity and Innovation (see Synopsis 2008/3 and 2008/10) will take place later on.

Much more on the concrete site and therefore more important for Europe’s industry is one of the priorities of the Swedish Presidency, namely to clearly advance in the establishment of the

Community patent and the related unified European patent-litigation regime. A breakthrough was achieved under the Czech Presidency in the last week of June, when Member States agreed to send draft legislation on the litigation regime to the European Court of Justice to assess its compatibility with the EU Treaties. Supporters of the patent reform argue that the new system will make it cheaper to obtain and defend patents and will increase legal certainty, which could both boost competitiveness of Europe's industry considerably (see Synopsis 2009/4).

Hopefully also of interest for industry will be the further development of the innovation flagship project of the Barroso Commission, the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT). The EIT launched its first call for two or three Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC) in April, with closing date on 27 August (see Synopsis 2009/3).

The business panel's website open for comments and contributions can be consulted under: <http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/innovationunlimited/>

## **Publications**

### **Clean Sky call published**

On 16 June, the Joint Technology Initiative (JTI) Clean Sky published its first call with a submission deadline on 31 August. The JTI Clean Sky is a Private-Public Partnership (PPP) which brings together the aeronautics industry and the European Commission. The call covers 72 individual research topics in five major areas: Green Regional Aircraft (GRA), Green Rotorcraft (GRC), Sustainable and Green Engines (SAGE), Smart Fixed Wing Aircraft (SFWA) and Systems for Green Operations (SGO). The budget of the call amounts to €32 million, of which €25 million are provided for by the Commission. The rest of the budget will come in the form of in-kind contributions from the programme partners. Depending on the type of participant, the funding of the European Commission will be between 50-75%. Eligible are legal entities such as SMEs, universities, research centres and aeronautics manufacturers from EU Member States or from countries associated to FP7.

The call text can be downloaded here:

[http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&call\\_id=221](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&call_id=221)

### **Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Technology Initiative launches second call**

On 2 July, the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Technology Initiative (FCH JTI) launched its second call. About €140 million have been allocated to this call, with €71.3 million from the European Commission matched by in-kind contributions of the industrial partners. The call covers 29 project topics. They are divided in five application areas: transportation and refuelling infrastructure, hydrogen production and distribution; stationary power generation and early markets, such as portable applications or small utility vehicles. The fifth application area focuses on cross-cutting issues, supporting research necessary for market creation, such as developing a life cycle assessment framework, training regulators or supporting SMEs. It is expected that FCH JTI will shorten market introduction of fuel cell and hydrogen energy technologies two to five years. FCH JTI will help to develop hydrogen storage, to improve fuel cells' durability as well as to increase performance and cost-efficiency. Submissions are expected until 15 October.

More information on the call can be found here:

[http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&call\\_id=225](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&call_id=225)

### **Knowledge for Growth expert group on innovation policy in times of crisis**

The Knowledge for Growth expert group (K4G) held its final conference in Brussels on 25 June. The K4G group is chaired by Commissioner Potocnik, who set the group up in 2005. Since then and under the lead of its Vice-Chair Dominique Foray from EPFL (see also p. 11) the group has provided him with top-level advice on several issues: how knowledge can contribute to

sustainable growth and prosperity, what policy mixes can promote knowledge creation, dissemination and use, and the role that different stakeholders can play in creating the knowledge society.

The K4G group final conference focused on the role of innovation policy in times of economic crisis. Seen the shortage of capital much attention was placed on the need to use resources more effectively. Another topic that came up was the importance of improving the diffusion of knowledge.

More information on the conference as well as the reports produced by the expert group can be found here:

<http://kfgconference2009.teamwork.fr/frame.php?page=home>

[http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/monitoring/knowledge\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/monitoring/knowledge_en.htm)

## ◆ **Education**

### **European Commission and Mexico embark on Education and Culture cooperation**

Commissioner for Education, Training and Culture, Ján Figel' and Mexico's Ambassadors Sandra Fuentes-Berain signed two joint declarations on education and culture on 11 June. The European Commission and the Mexican government plan to reinforce their cooperation in those two key areas through the form of a policy dialogue. The objective of this dialogue is to exchange information and experiences that are beneficial for both sides. The cooperation between the two countries has been long ongoing, for example in education through EU-funded programmes such as Erasmus Mundus. The success rate of Mexican students applying for the programme is 17% for this year, well above the world average of 7%. In the area of cultural cooperation the Cultural Fund EU-Mexico has been launched as a pilot from 2008-2010 and it is expected that the second phase from 2009-2013 will be signed shortly.

The joint declarations can be found under:

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc/jointmexico\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc/jointmexico_en.pdf)

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc/mexicoculture\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/doc/mexicoculture_en.pdf)

### **Mobility Awards for Universities**

On 11 June, the European Commission awarded quality labels to 65 European higher education institutions that facilitate mobility for their students. The awards were given on the basis of the application of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and on the Diploma Supplement (DS). Applications for the ECTS/DS labels can be submitted by a higher education institution that has been awarded a Standard or an Extended Erasmus University Charter (Standard Charter and Student placements). In order to be eligible, applicant institutions must be located within a EU Member State, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Turkey. Universities that showed excellence in facilitating mobility for their students were honoured with this label; amongst those were the Catholic University of Leuven (B, ECTS label), the University of Bournemouth (UK, DS label) and the University of Agder (N, both labels). In future, these labels will be awarded annually by the European Commission to suitable candidate institutions.

To know more about the award and the universities that were awarded, follow this link:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/907&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN>

### Study on future skill supply in Europe up to 2020

On 9 June, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) released a report on the qualifications of European workers entitled: “Future skill supply in Europe: Medium-term forecast up to 2020”. The publication is assessing the supply and demand of employers within Europe up to 2020. The study includes the Member States and Norway, without Malta and no information is available for Switzerland either. The aim of the study is to identify early on new and emerging skills and to anticipate skill needs and supply. The report states that the supply of people with high- and medium-level qualifications will rise, whereas the population of low-level qualification people is projected to decline. Moreover, the increase seems to be more pronounced for women and for young people. Finally, the report warns that the current financial and economic crisis might affect the future development of the skills supply and demand in Europe.

In order to download the whole study, please follow this link:

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Upload/Information\\_resources/Bookshop/546/4086\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Upload/Information_resources/Bookshop/546/4086_en.pdf)

### ◆ SwissCore Küche

#### SwissCore Experts' Lunch threw light on how to foster innovation efficiently

The 2008 European Innovation Scoreboard shows Switzerland on its top. On this occasion the Experts Lunch launched a debate on the effectiveness of innovation policy. More than 80 participants followed the presentations. Franziska Schwarz (OPET) mentioned in her introduction some key elements of Switzerland's success, such as an open economy and high R&D spending of the private enterprise sector. Jean-Noël Durvy (DG Enterprise and Industry) announced the EU innovation plan for the beginning of 2010 (see Dossier 8), whereas Dominique Foray (EPFL and Vice-Chair of the Knowledge for Growth expert group, see publication p. 9) underlined the importance of “smart specialisation” as an entrepreneurial process taking place on the regional level. This means that regions should find a highly profitable niche for themselves instead of copying with little success what other regions already do. He also claimed for special policy measures to support what he called “Young Radical Innovators”, as current funding schemes support mainly traditional SMEs. Finally, Georg Brodach, Senior Vice-President of ABB Europe Ltd, stressed the importance to protect efficiently intellectual property and called therefore for the rapid creation of the Community patent, an issue that stands high on the agenda of the beginning Swedish Presidency of the EU.

The event, jointly organised by SwissCore, economiesuisse and the Swiss Chamber of Commerce for Belgium and Luxemburg, took place on 24 June at the EFTA Secretariat in Brussels.

The presentations can be accessed on the SwissCore website by clicking on the respective title in the event program: <http://www.swisscore.org/E/events/briefing/Pages/Swissinnovationbriefing.aspx>



*The Experts' Lunch attracted a large audience of more than 80 people*



*Jean-Noël Durvy (European Commission) and Franziska Schwarz (Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology OPET)*



*Georg Brodach (ABB Europe Ltd)*



*Dominique Foray (EPFL)*