

SwissCore Synopsis

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◆ Seen from Brussels

Finally moving from Nice to Lisbon

In these times where the temperatures start approaching their annual minimums, this title could summon pictures of summer holidays in warmer climates, if we weren't talking about EU Treaties. And moving from Nice to Lisbon certainly was no holiday: the Treaty of Lisbon started its claim to fame as a way to salvage the moribund EU Constitution, and was then signed by the Heads of States and Governments after a "year of reflection" on the future of the EU. Nearly two years later, the Czech President finally apposed its signature under the document on 3 November, thus ending a long and tedious ratification process which saw a double referendum in Ireland and a dignitary in a castle on a hill that played for time and had Europe hold its breath.

This ratification indeed comes in a timely way, as the current European Commission is only fulfilling placeholder duties since 1 November (what some voices call a "lame duck Commission"), and this until the second Barroso Commission is sworn in. Despite the fact that the Lisbon Treaty should come into effect on 1 December, the appointment of a new Commission usually is a longer process which includes a hearing of each of the future Commissioners at the European Parliament. This time, the process is further complicated by the need to appoint a permanent Council President and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs, the latter also being a Commission vice-President; these are two of the novelties introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. These high-level jobs are keenly sought after by several Member States, which means that negotiations could drag on. As a result, if all goes well, a new Commission might be in place already on 1 January; however, the process could last until end of February.

To prevent some of the delays due to a longer interim period, the current Commission has adopted in October the fourth initiative under Art. 169 (see p. 3), proposed a new public-private partnership for the Future Internet (p. 9), devised a way to finance the Strategic Energy Technology plan (p. 8) and appointed a new Director-General for DG Education and Culture (see p. 9). In addition, a series of important reports and communications have also been issued, in particular the Commission's response to the review of the European Research Council (p. 4). After all this frenetic activity followed by paralysis due to its "lame" status, it is to hope that the European Commission will soon find the way to the sun in its move from Nice to Lisbon.

◆ Research

7th Framework Programme (FP7)

Second FP7 monitoring report published

On 1 October, the European Commission published the second FP7 monitoring report, covering the first two years of the research programme (2007-2008). Like the first monitoring report, which was tabled at the beginning of the year, the second one also follows the new FP7 monitoring policy of DG Research and is based on a standard set of indicators (see Synopsis 2009/2). For the first time, however, the present report allows for some comparative analysis over time. Further, a lot of new data has been added, especially regarding the negotiation of the grant agreements (not many of them had been signed when the first report came out). The main findings of the second report are:

- Over 25'000 proposals were received in response to the 109 calls for proposals in 2007-2008, involving almost 160'000 applicants. 5500 proposals were retained, involving 35'000 participants and committing €10 billion EU funding.
- 21,6% of the contact persons for scientific aspects on the proposals are women, as well as 35,4% of the Marie Curie fellows.

- SMEs represent 15,5% of all participants. This number, albeit pleasing, should be taken with a grain of salt as not every entity registered as SMEs truly is one. Moreover, the financial contribution going to SMEs tends to be smaller than average.
- 136 countries are currently involved in FP7; amongst the most active non-European ones are Russia, Brazil, India, China and the USA.
- The quality of the evaluations was found to be satisfactory to excellent by 97,6% of the evaluators.
- 1170 requests for redress were received, of which only 17 led to a re-evaluation.
- The “time-to-grant” is overall in the range of 10 to 11 months; despite the fact that this is 2-3 months faster than under FP6, it is still far too long compared with national procedures.

While these numbers convey an overall positive image of FP7’s implementation, it should be mentioned here that for many indicators the data is still somewhat thin. Only by 2011, when close to half of the expected grants will have been signed and some experience will have been gained with reporting and project outcomes will we be able to measure the real impact of FP7.

The second FP7 monitoring report can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/reports/2009/pdf/second_fp7_monitoring_en.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none

Training in gender aspects in FP7

The monitoring and assessment studies of the previous Framework Programmes (FP5, FP6) have shown that, despite increasing efforts to promote gender equality in research, women remain under-represented and the issue of gender is far from being systematically addressed in research projects.

Therefore, the 7th Framework Decision states that “the integration of the gender dimension and gender equality will be addressed in all areas of research” and promotes gender-sensitive research through a twin approach: on the one hand special attention should be paid on providing equal opportunities for women and men; moreover gender should be integrated into the research content all the way from the initial research idea to the dissemination of results and considered as a key analytical and explanatory variable in research.

What concrete measures are taken to support these goals? The FP7 Negotiation Guidance Notes gives examples of actions to be adopted by research teams and universities; subscribing to the principles of the European Charter and Code for the Recruitment of Researchers is seen as good practice in terms of gender equality; and a target of 40% women’s participation at all levels has been set. Moreover, devoting research resources to specific gender research should help reach the second objective of the “twin approach”.

Even more concretely, the European Commission now offers training opportunities on how to integrate gender aspects into research. The project “Gender in Research” is funded under the FP7 Capacities programme and offers one-day training workshops for research professionals. The sessions provide practical guidance, using clear and concrete projects-related examples, on how the gender dimension can be integrated in research.

Courses run from September 2009 until December 2010 and participation is free.

More information about the project can be found under:

<http://www.yellowwindow.be/genderinresearch/>

Commission proposes Article 169 research initiative on Baltic Sea

On 29 October, the European Commission proposed a new seven-year research initiative, called Bonus-169. Bonus uses Article 169 as legal basis and aims at enhancing the Baltic Sea region’s research capacity to ensure a more sustainable development of the region. The eight EU Member States involved will contribute an amount of up to €50 million, and the Commission will provide another €50 million. Bonus will bring together national research programmes and activities of the 8 Baltic Sea states in a single joint research programme, mainly focused on environmental research. Participating states are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden.

The Commission proposal for Bonus will now be submitted to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

The proposal as well as more information on Bonus and the involved research programmes can be found here:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0610:FIN:EN:PDF>

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

EU Research Policy

The European Commission's response to the ERC review

On 22 October, the European Commission responded to the report about the review of the European Research Council (ERC). This response had been eagerly awaited by all involved stakeholders, as it will show the way for the future of the ERC. Last spring, a group of distinguished experts led by Vaira Vike-Freiberga had examined the structures and mode of operation of this first pan-European funding agency for frontier research and had published the review report on 23 July (see Synopsis 2009/7). On 25 August, the Scientific Council of the ERC had tabled its own opinion on the review, welcoming all recommendations made by the report, but stressing the need for real independence of the ERC (see Synopsis 2009/8).

In the present Communication, the Commission proposes a two-fold strategy to “address (...) the underlying causes of administrative inefficiencies and structural problems”, composed of immediate and short-term actions, as well as medium-term actions, including indicative timeframes.

For the short-term, the Commission proposes the following measures:

- Clarify the relations between the ERCEA and the Scientific Council and revise the ERC decision if necessary. Moreover, a series of sub-committees (for evaluation, for conflicts of interest) as well as a standing, independent Identification Committee should be set up.
- In order to integrate the scientific and administrative management, merge the post of the ERCEA Director and that of the Secretary-General. The post should be filled by a distinguished scientist with robust administrative experience. The Scientific Council is supposed to be involved in the selection process, but it remains to be seen to what extent. While the expert panel had recommended that the future ERC Director as well as the Scientific Council report directly to the Research Commissioner, the Commission states that they will be “invited to meet the Commissioner (...) whenever appropriate to discuss progress in the achievement of ERC’s objectives”.
- “Consider” the adjustment of the composition of the ERCEA Steering Committee to include more scientists. While this sounds like a possibility for the Scientific Council to exert more direct control on the ERCEA, it is clearly stated that the Commission should be “able to exercise at all times its function of control and supervision of the ERCEA by keeping the majority of votes”.
- Develop a coherent and integrated communication strategy. By this the Commission mainly means that a single website for the Scientific Council and the ERCEA will be set up.
- Lighter “ERC-specific” administrative procedures will be set up, both for the evaluations and for grant management.

The medium-term measures mainly concern the changes in the “philosophy” of administrative management, i.e. the departure from the “culture of control”. Here, the Commission points to the ongoing revision of the Financial Regulations (see p. 7) and states that it will “formulate possible responses to the specific administrative and financial shortcomings” in this context.

While the response of the Commission to the ERC review report has the merit to draw immediate lines of action including timelines for implementation, it cannot hide the fact that in certain aspects, the Commission hierarchy is not ready to let the ERC run freely. In addition, the possibility of structuring the ERC according to Art. 171 is elegantly glossed over by citing the findings of the review panel, which was rather cautious with this option. In contrast, in its own

response to the review, the ERC Scientific Council was advocating further examination of such a possibility, which would allow for more independence from the Commission administration. It thus seems like the ERC will be stuck with the Executive Agency model in the near future...

The response of the Commission to the ERC review can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other_reports_studies_and_documents/commission_communication_on_the_erc_review_-_22_october_2009.pdf

The European Court of Auditors' view on the Networks of Excellence

On 14 October, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) added another chapter to the saga on the Networks of Excellence (NoEs). In its report "Networks of Excellence' and 'Integrated Projects' in Community research policy: did they achieve their objectives?", the Court investigated these two instruments, which had been newly introduced under FP6. For this, the results of these two types of FP6 projects were audited through a combination of document and data analysis as well as series of interviews and workshops.

The main conclusions of the ECA's report are the following:

- The "intervention logic", i.e. the objective of these instruments was not clear. The ECA recommends setting one single clear objective for each instrument.
- While both Integrated Projects (IPs) and NoEs have been successful in promoting research collaboration, NoEs have not achieved the expected long-term integration of research activities amongst participants. In this context, the ECA recommends to consider extending the funding of certain FP6 NoEs under FP7 on a case-by-case basis, as the original five-year funding might have been too short to attain the desired integration.
- The Court criticises that both instruments have not leveraged additional public and private R&D investment, as was expected from them. It thus recommends reassessing the realism of certain targets, like SME participation.
- The ECA found that the projects were generally poorly managed by the relevant services of the Commission, as contradictory or incomplete information had been given to participants. The Commission "should ensure clear and timely guidance, speedier grant awarding procedures and better project monitoring".

In its response to the findings of the Court, which is included in the report, the European Commission does not acknowledge much mistakes or shortcomings from its own side; this despite the fact that some of these findings are similar to the ones of an expert group that had examined the NoEs in September 2008 (see Synopsis 2008/9). While the ECA's and the expert group's recommendation to extend certain FP6 NoEs is currently being implemented, it is done without providing them with funding under FP7; on the other hand, new NoEs have been called for in recent times. It is hard to imagine that such a strategy would lead to further financial sustainability and increased integration of these networks.

The European Court of Auditor's report can be found under:

<http://eca.europa.eu/portal/pls/portal/docs/1/3074294.PDF>

ERAB's vision of a new Renaissance in Europe

On 6 October, the European Research Area Board (ERAB) presented its first annual report, in the form of a strategic view for ERA in 2030. The report postulates that in order to face the challenges of the future (climate change, water and food shortage, etc.), Europe needs a "new Renaissance", similar to the one that happened in the 15th and 16th century, when the explosion of scientific and artistic activity paved the way for the Industrial Revolution, and thus greater prosperity. In order to achieve what it calls a "paradigm shift in how we think, live and interact together", as well as "in what the role and place of science should be", ERAB proposes to act on six fundamental themes:

1. A united ERA, which will be achieved when the share of EU research funding doubles to 10%, 10% of national funding is coordinated and mobility triples.
2. An ERA driven by societal needs: by this, ERAB essentially means that one third of research should be geared towards (the usual) "Grand Challenges", with 30% of scientists working on

such themes, and multi-disciplinary research as well as “e-science” are widely spread throughout ERA.

3. An ERA based on a shared responsibility between science, policy and society: the (not always so new) ideas proposed here are a Chief Scientific Advisor for the EU, more citizens educated in science and technology, widespread “open access”, 50% women in science, a tripling of education spending in the EU (to 3.3% of GDP), and a universal code of scientific ethics.
4. An ERA of open innovation: while the real effect of the proposed “Open Innovation Charter” and the “Open Knowledge Institution label” seems uncertain, the request for more mobility of researchers between the public and the private sector, for a tripling of risk capital and for 2% innovative public procurement echo earlier recommendations. The proposal of having 5% of GDP going to R&D, with 2/3 coming from industry, by 2030 is rather ambitious...
5. An ERA to deliver excellence: here, the recommendations of ERAB are quite strong, as no less than 50% of EC research funding should go to frontier research. As regards to the proposal of an “ERA of Agencies” at arm’s-length, the EC could start and show the way with the ERC.
6. An ERA of cohesion: under this heading, ERAB wishes to increase the part for research in the EU budget, as well as to devote 30% of the structural funds for it. The proposal of having half the population with tertiary education could be seriously criticised, especially from countries with a strong professional education system.

In our opinion this paper, albeit interesting, does unfortunately bring only very few really new ideas. It has the merit to compile many inputs from previous and ongoing discussions into a single, short document, and provides a set of numeric indicators to benchmark achievements. However, considering the long time horizon of ERAB’s vision, it is questionable whether these numbers will still make sense in 20 years. More modest targets on a smaller time scale might in fact have more impact and spark discussions in the more immediate term.

The first annual report of ERAB can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/erab/pdf/erab-first-annual-report-06102009_en.pdf

Study monitoring the mobility of young researchers in the Member States

The European Parliament’s Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) requested a study on the mobility of young researchers, which should help the EU to monitor the progress of the Member States in the introduction of measures to support the mobility of researchers, following the EC Communication “European partnership for researchers” published in May 2008 (see Synopsis 2008/5). The study was debated in Brussels on 15 October.

Indeed there are several issues in Europe hindering the efficient mobility of researchers, such as social security, pension schemes, quality of life, financial concerns (e.g. tax, salaries and benefits), as well as career progress opportunities. The document also shows that information on career opportunities and mobility issues seems to be missing.

The study concludes that, despite new support measures introduced by the EU, the progress remains slow in the Member States. Further effort is still needed in order to facilitate mobility in particular for young researchers. The existing EU initiatives such as Marie Curie activities, Charter and Code, Scientific visas, EURAXESS services, Researchers’ portal, or ERA-Links should therefore be further developed and supported. The document also recommends to link more closely such activities to the European Technology Platforms (ETP), the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI) and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC) of the EIT.

The study is available on the Parliament’s website:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/studies/download.do?language=en&file=27511>

Publications

Public consultation on the review of the EU Financial Regulations

Mid-October, the European Commission has launched a public consultation on the review of the Community Financial Regulations. The responses to and conclusions from this consultation will serve as a basis for the Commission's proposal on the review of the Financial Regulation, to be presented mid-2010.

Beneficiaries and managers of EU funds are invited to submit their views on how to make the rules for grants and contracts more effective for everyone. The open consultation is an opportunity for all interested parties to share their valuable and practical experience, allowing the Commission, among other things, to improve access to grants and simplify the administration of financial files. Eleven questions are proposed in order to streamline the answers.

This consultation is complementary to the consultation on simplification launched this summer and the interim evaluation of FP7 that will run from end 2009 to mid-2010.

This exercise is of particular importance as the EU starts to prepare the ground for the next generation of programmes after 2013. Thus, the revision of the Financial Regulations will also have a significant impact on the design and implementation of FP8.

The consultation will be open until 18 December 2009.

Contributions can be submitted online on the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/consultations/FRconsult2009_en.htm

The document with questions can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/consultations/FRconsult2009/consultation_paper_en.pdf

A synoptic overview of the pieces of legislation under revision is available on the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/documents/financial_regulation_en.htm

Handbook of Responsible Partnering: updated version

The Responsible Partnering Initiative was launched in 2004 by the European University Association (EUA), together with the European Industrial Research Management Association (EIRMA), the European Association of Research and Technology Organizations (EARTO) and ProTon Europe. It aims at improving strategic collaboration and knowledge exchange between companies and publicly-funded research organizations (PROs). As a result, the Handbook of Responsible Partnering was published in March 2005.

The revised version published in October 2009 does not make fundamentally changed recommendations, but it reflects the conclusions of the December 2007 Conference and subsequent analysis of issues such as SMEs, State aid and Human factors; the growing maturity of the knowledge exchange system; the 2008 Community Recommendations on IPR management; and results from the DOC-CAREERS study published in June 2009.

The revised version of the Handbook is available under:

<http://www.eirma.org/pubs/briefs/rp-2009-v11.pdf>

◆ Innovation

Business Panel on future EU innovation policy publishes report

A Business Panel, mandated by DG Enterprise and Industry to propose priorities and actions for future EU innovation policy, published a report in October. The panel suggests five propositions to design the future innovation policy:

1. The concept of innovation needs to become broader. This means that EU actions have to respond to compelling social challenges. According to the panel this could include the

financing of social innovation funds or transform the public sector with a budgetary innovation target.

2. More needs to be done to speed up the uptake of innovative solutions and technologies in the public sector. Funding programmes and innovation support must be synchronised with development of standards, public procurement and regulations. The EU should set clear innovation targets and launch ambitious initiatives with synchronised actions around major challenges. New regulations should not hamper innovation but should be innovation friendly.
3. Ultrafast broadband and smart energy grid connections should become EU-wide infrastructure projects, able to boost innovation considerably. For this, the EU should make a clear commitment that every household, business and public building has access to those technologies.
4. New financing models should build on new partnerships to share risk and should combine more intelligently different funding instruments. Innovation should become core to financial institutions, with the European Investment Bank (EIB) becoming a European Innovation Bank. In particular the panel proposes that the European Investment Fund (EIF) creates a pan-European Innovation Fund. Such a fund, backed by the EIF, should attract enough co-investment from the private sector and should be free from any political interference from Brussels or Member States governments.
5. Finally, places for new types of collaborations should be created. Rather vaguely the panel suggests to create and connect innovation labs, to invest in cultural and creative institutions and networks, to reinforce the role of brokers and intermediaries, to develop a major prize for innovative localities, and to stimulate universities and public research centres to be more open and international.

Some of the ideas presented by the panel seem to be airy and rather academic, lacking the pragmatism and the perspective one would expect from a Business Panel. Others, like the idea of a pan-European Innovation Fund, are more pertinent and thought-through, and they could meet a need that exist in several countries. The report will be used by the Commission when drafting the European Innovation Act, planned for spring 2010.

The full report of the Business Panel can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/files/panel_report_en.pdf

Financing strategic energy technology

The European Commission (EC) published on 7 October a proposal for “Investing in the Development of Low Carbon Technologies”. This Communication addresses resources needs and examines potential avenues to leverage private and public investment to finance the different initiatives of the Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-Plan).

When first announcing the SET-Plan in November 2007, the EC had promised to come up with proposals on financing energy technologies before the end of 2008. The process has been delayed because assessing public and private energy R&D spending and proposing relevant financing for the SET-Plan initiatives was actually harder than foreseen.

Together with stakeholders, the EC has now drawn up roadmaps for each of the six European Industrial Initiatives recognized by the SET-Plan as having strong potential to reduce emissions (wind, solar, biotechnology, carbon capture and storage, electricity grids and nuclear). The roadmaps detail the funding necessary to get the technologies ready for market. Although the funding division is criticised by some environmentalist, the proposal is still welcomed by the majority.

In the Communication, the EC puts a cost price – on top of the current level investment for energy research – of an additional public and private investment of €50 billion over the next ten years, i.e. an increase from the current €3 billion per year to €8 billion. However, it is not clear yet where the money will come from.

The EC is calling on the public and private sectors to share and coordinate their investments and efforts. It acknowledges that public support is essential given technological uncertainties and high market risk and to achieve public energy policy goals and therefore calls for the public investment

for new energy technologies to rise. In 2007, the burden of non-nuclear energy research was shouldered to 70% by the private sector and 30% by public funding. The EC established a ratio of 56% (private) to 44% (public) for all SET-Plan priority technologies.

Possible source of extra public funding could come from the €300 million in allowances in the European Trading Scheme (ETS) for carbon. The European Investment Bank will also provide loans to encourage risky investment. At EU level, programmes such as FP7, CIP (more specifically the Intelligent Energy-Europe programme) and the European Economic Recovery Plan are currently not sufficient to finance the SET-Plan initiatives. Therefore, the energy technologies budget should increase within the next generation of programmes and the mid-term review of the EU budget should also lead to additional funding to support the SET-Plan initiatives. Finally, the EC notes that additional funding in itself is not sufficient. There should be a move from financing individual projects to co-investing in programmes. It would lead to greater combining of EU and national public resources and creating effective PPPs with industry. Therefore, in the EC's view, enhanced coordination between funding sources is more than essential.

The Communication "Investing in the Development of Low Carbon Technologies (SET-Plan)" can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/technology/set_plan/doc/2009_comm_investing_development_low_carbon_technologies_en.pdf

Public Private Partnership on the Future Internet proposed

A Communication on future internet technologies, foreseen as the fourth EU Public Private Partnership (PPP), has been published on 28 October. The other three PPP that were launched this summer are Factories of the Future, Green Car, and Energy Efficient Buildings (see Synopsis 2009/3).

For the period 2011 to 2013, DG Information Society (DG INFSO) plans to allocate an additional €300 million for the Future Internet initiative. This will happen under the upcoming ICT Work Programmes, with a first call for proposals to be issued in 2010.

By mid-2010 the European Commission expects the industry to define a focused content for the Future Internet PPP. The Communication mentions the review of the legal and governance structure of JTIs in general. A Communication assessing different models of PPPs and Joint Undertakings will most likely be published at the end of November (the publication of this document has already been postponed several times). The Communication will sum up the lessons learned regarding the set-up of existing JTI's and is therefore a precondition for the EC's further examination of future JTIs in the field of internet technologies (Future Internet) as well as in any other field (e.g. Factories of the Future, Green Car). Depending on the findings of this Communication, the Spanish Presidency of the EU might have to deal with proposals for new Joint Undertakings.

The Communication on a PPP on the Future Internet can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/foi/library/fi-communication_en.pdf

◆ Education

New Director-General for Education and Culture

On 28 October, the European Commission appointed Jan Trzczyński, a Polish citizen, as Director-General of the Education and Culture (EAC) DG. It is the first time that a national of a new Member State is appointed at this level.

Mr Jan Trzczyński is currently Deputy Director-General of DG EAC. He joined the EC in 2007 as Deputy Director-General for Enlargement after working as Secretary of State in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which capacity he was Poland's chief negotiator during the accession negotiations.

Mr Truszczyński is expected to take up his duties on 1 May 2010. He will then replace current Director-General Odile Quintin and provide leadership to the DG EAC in carrying out its work in the areas of education, training, culture, youth, citizenship, multilingualism and sport.

Gender inequalities in education persist

The issue of gender differences and inequalities is addressed in a report drafted by the independent Network of Experts in Social Sciences of Education and Training (NESSE) and published by the European Commission on 5 October. The analysis does not include data from Switzerland. Despite substantial progress achieved over the past decades, gender inequalities remain in European education system in terms of subject preferences and performance, and in qualitative aspects of the education and training experience.

The study comes across interesting key findings: gender inequality is closely tied to other factors such as social class, ethnicity and minority status; reading behavior is determined to a great degree by gender; in universities, gender is a determinant factor in certain areas; parents, peers and teachers can play a crucial role in breaking gender-stereotypical expectations and behavior; in countries with highly selective academic streaming, women are often disadvantaged in the field of mathematics and science, while men are disproportionately placed in lower streams.

The main message of the report is that gender equality does not happen by accident. The more equal societies are in economic and social terms, the greater the likelihood there is of having gender equality in education. Hence promoting positive attitude towards learning and encouraging lifelong learning.

Next month, Eurydice will publish a complementary report on gender and educational attainment and the Swedish presidency will organize a conference on this theme in Uppsala in November.

The report "Gender and Education (and employment) - lessons from research for policy makers" can be found under:

<http://www.nesse.fr/nesse/activities/reports/activities/reports/gender-report-pdf>

Lifelong Learning Programme Infodays: a great opportunity for Switzerland!

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), will organize two Infodays (in Brussels and in Helsinki) on the centralized actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). Participants will receive information about the programme's priorities, the novelties in the 2010 call for proposals, as well as practical advice on the preparation and submission of applications. In the afternoon, workshops on each sub-programme and on transversal issues will take place.

Actors involved in the preparation of Switzerland's future participation in the LLP should seize this opportunity to become more knowledgeable on the LLP and hence guarantee best implementation and outcome on the Swiss side.

Registrations for the Infoday held in Brussels on 7 December are unfortunately already closed. However, it is still possible to register for the Helsinki Infoday of 23 November or to participate online in the Brussels Infoday: webstreaming will be accessible on the following page: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/infoday10/infoday_2010_en.htm and you will be able to ask questions online during the event.

The programme can be found here: <http://lllinfofodays.teamwork.fr/programme.php>; and it is possible to register online for Helsinki under: <http://lllinfofodays.teamwork.fr/home.php>.

Publications

Arts education in the EU

In the context of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation, the European Commission published a study on the state of arts education in the EU.

The report is based on the work of the Eurydice network and covers full time compulsory education in 30 European countries (not Switzerland). The study points out that the minimum

taught time devoted to arts education is in general quite low, especially at lower secondary level, and that primary school teachers are sometimes not trained to teach all art-forms included in the curriculum. The report also reviews the initiatives taken in some countries to encourage art education.

The study “Arts and Cultural Education at School in Europe” can be found under: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/113EN.pdf

Feasibility study on student lending facility

The European Commission has launched a call for tenders for a feasibility study to examine the potential need for a student lending facility at European level.

It has been shown that mobility has a very positive impact on students in term of career and life opportunities. Yet, the associated cost can be a significant disincentive for some students. Easing the access to student lending and solving the issue of portability of stipends could prove a way to overcome barriers to student mobility.

Therefore, the EC wants to obtain a review of existing student financial support and its portability for mobile students as well as to assess the added value of establishing a European Student lending facility that could potentially be incorporated into the EU's funding support for higher education.

More information about the public tender can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/calls/doc1841_en.htm

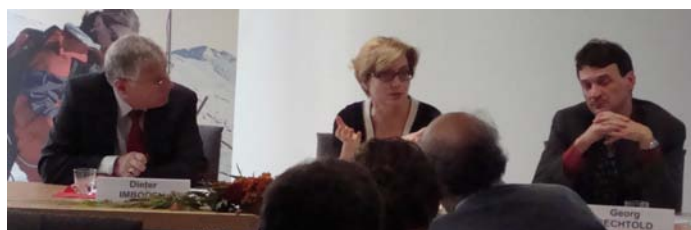
◆ SwissCore Küche

The European Research Area realized through bottom up initiatives?

On 26 October, SwissCore organised with the Mission of Switzerland to the EU an event on the Lead Agency Procedure developed between German, Austrian and Swiss research organisations (DFG, FWF and SNSF) in order to simplify the evaluation process of bi- or trilateral projects.

Prof. Dieter Imboden, President of the Research Council of the SNSF and President of EUROHORCS, presented the concept and objectives of the Lead Agency Procedure, the first experiences with its realisation as well as possible developments of the scheme towards a “European Grant Union”. Dr. Georg Bechtold, programme manager at the DFG, focused his presentation on the practical aspects of the Lead Agency process, including some of the unforeseen pitfalls and solutions to overcome them. This new type of bottom-up collaboration at trans-national level was commented by Dr. Anneli Pauli, Deputy Director-General for Research, in the light of the implementation of the ERA initiatives and the further construction of the ERA.

The panel discussion following the presentations allowed the public to enter into the debate on new instruments of cooperation and on the principle of subsidiarity in the ongoing construction of the ERA (top-down, bottom-up or a combination of both).



The presentations will be available on the SwissCore website very soon:

<http://www.swisscore.org/E/events/briefing/Pages/swissciencebriefing.aspx>