

SwissCore Synopsis

April 2010

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◆ Seen from Brussels

The European Commission sets its priorities for 2010

At the end of March, the new European Commission (EC) under the second Barroso mandate, which was confirmed in February (see Synopsis 2010/1), unveiled its priorities in its first Commission Work Programme 2010 (CWP 2010). The main priority defined by the EC supports a way out of the economic crisis and should start advancing on the flagships initiatives defined within the “Europe 2020”, the new European strategy set for the next decade (see Synopsis 2010/2).

The CWP 2010 presents 34 strategic priorities, divided into four main strands. Especially the first and fourth strands are relevant for the research, innovation and education policy field.

- The first strand addresses actions to tackle the economic crisis, focusing on the digital agenda, industrial policy, research and innovation, youth mobility and unemployment, skills and poverty.
- The second and third strands are focused on citizens’ agenda and external relations.
- The fourth strand engages in the modernization of EU instruments, especially the budget review, which will initiate the discussion on the future of the financial perspectives after 2013.

For the first time, a multiannual overview tables the work foreseen for the coming years. Indeed, the CWP 2010 states a declaration of priorities for 2010 but also reveals intents for the years 2010 to 2014. This novelty should improve predictability for all stakeholders, allow them to better time their input to the policy process and facilitate cooperation with the other EU institutions. In order to provide even more transparency, the Commission innovates by putting forward really informative and detailed roadmaps for initiatives mentioned in the CWP 2010 that are likely to have significant impacts.

A set of annexes lists the strategic initiatives scheduled for adoption in 2010: a list of possible strategic and priority initiatives under consideration, a list of simplification actions and of withdrawals of pending proposals. All the planned initiatives are briefly described. The type of document (legislative or not) as well as an envisaged timeframe are mentioned.

- Particularly interesting for our fields under Annex 1 are the Communications on a [European Digital Agenda](#), a [European Plan for Research and Innovation](#), an [industrial policy for the globalised era](#), the [“Youth on the Move” initiative](#) as well as the [Agenda for New Skills and Jobs](#).
- Surprisingly, the triennial revision of the Financial Regulation and implementation rules as well as the mid-term review of FP7 are mentioned as “to be taken under consideration” in Annex II. On the other hand, the proposals for the follow-up programmes of the current FP7, CIP, Euratom and LLP/Youth in Action (to be integrated both under a “Youth on the Move” programme) are listed as legislative acts to be planned in the next years. Other initiatives worth to be mentioned: the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the EIT and the amendment to the EIT Regulation, as well as the Communication on an overarching action plan for the development of ERA.
- In Annex 3, the Communication simplifying the implementation of the research framework programme is presented (see article below).

Knowing that most proposals for legislation take 18 months to 2 years to be agreed upon, initiatives mentioned in the CWP 2010 have a good chance of being passed into law during the current Commission’s term ending on 31 October 2014.

The Commission Work Programme 2010 can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2010_en.pdf

The Commission’s roadmaps for significant initiatives (5 hyperlinks above) are continuously updated under:

http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/roadmaps_2010_en.htm

Concrete proposals for simplification within FP7 unveiled by the Commission

On 29 April, the European Commission (EC) released its proposals for the simplification of the implementation of the Research Framework Programmes (FPs). Referring to the objectives set in the Europe 2020 strategy and the importance of research and innovation as key drivers to tackle the current economic crisis, the Communication stresses that attractiveness and accessibility are crucial to ensure the impact and effectiveness of the FPs. This Communication comes in time for the on-going revision of the Financial Regulations of the EU which constitutes the general legal framework for the management of the EU budget. In this context, the EC would like to find the right balance between trust and control. Therefore parallel work is currently being done by the EU institutions on the definition of a tolerable risk of error applicable to the research policy, expected to be presented in May 2010.

After reporting the achievements reached so far, the Communication acknowledges that additional simplification efforts are needed. They are stipulated in three categories:

- Improvements to be implemented on short-term by the EC under the current legal and regulatory framework mainly for processes and tools: the development of the Research Participant Portal, the clarity and accessibility of guidance documents and services as well as the consistent interpretation and application of rules are some examples of improvements, which aim at further reducing the time-to-grant and time-to-pay.
- Changes to the rules but still under the current cost-based model in order to reduce the error rate: this should allow a broader acceptance of usual accounting practices (including average personnel costs), the reduction of the disparity of special conditions (funding rates or methods for determining indirect costs), a provision for owner-managers of SMEs and a change to the grant selection process (by suppressing the consultation on evaluation decisions to Programme Committee's representatives). The broader use of lump sum elements, such as in the Specific Programme People/Marie Curie, is mentioned as a possible simplification. This can be disputable as the use of lump sums under the current cost-based model does not prevent reporting and financial auditing.
- Recommendations for more far-reaching changes towards a result-based funding using lump sums: this would minimise the administrative burden for accounting and the needs for financial ex-ante and ex-post checking by shifting the control from the financial to the scientific side. The suggestion would need a clear definition of the word "lump sum", as well as a reinforced scientific/technical monitoring as a basis for the payment decisions.

For any improvement relevant to the two last categories, changes to the rules would be required under the ordinary legislative procedure (co-decision), will take at least one year. Changes could therefore only apply for the last wave of FP7 calls.

A reduction of the funding instruments is also envisaged, especially in the context of the preparation of the next Framework Programmes. The necessity of continuity for applicable funding rules is also stressed. The Communication refers to other reports that should help achieving the simplification of future research programmes such as the recommendations made by the JTI Sherpa Group (see Synopsis 2010/2).

Simultaneously with the publication of the Communication, the Commission revealed the names of the members of the expert panel appointed to deliver the report on the FP7 interim evaluation.

The Communication "Simplifying the implementation of the Research Framework Programmes" can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/pdf/communication_on_simplification_2010_en.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none

The list of experts who will report on the FP7 interim evaluation is available under:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/156&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Debates on research funding at the European Parliament and Council of Ministers

Many hearings at the European Parliament and different events related to the simplification issue of FP7 and the review of the Financial Regulations are currently conducted in Brussels in order to collect even more inputs from different stakeholders than the ones already gathered through the consultation exercise of last year (see Synopsis 2009/7 and 2009/9).

These open debates at the European institutions confirm that the ongoing discussions regarding the role of EU research funding towards a new definition of the next generation of EU programmes in research, innovation and education after 2014 have definitely started.

On top of that and in parallel to the set-up of new targets and indicators for the next decade within the Europe 2020 strategy, a hearing at the European Parliament recently presented a US model for measuring the impact of R&D, named STAR METRICS. The American project, aiming at documenting the outcome of science investments to the public, will first develop a transparent way of calculating the impact of federal science spending on job creation. Subsequently, the project wishes to develop an infrastructure to measure broader impacts on areas such as economic growth, workforce and social outcomes, as well as scientific knowledge. This presentation was organised by the European Commission in preparation for its Research and Innovation Plan to be published in September 2010. Indeed, a position on measuring return on investment in science is expected to be included in this proposal of the European Commission.

In this context, the Council of Ministers dealing with research is also preparing to endorse a new approach to support European Research and Innovation at its next meeting in May. Draft Council conclusions on the new approaches for the efficient support of European Research and Innovation were proposed on 15 April.

All current debates will hopefully provide many inputs for the upcoming Communications of the European Commission.

The presentations held at the European Parliament on the efficiency and effectiveness of FP7 can be found under:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/hearingsCom.do?language=EN&body=CONT>

Info on the hearing on “How to measure scientific performance and output for improved policy making?” can be found under:

<http://www.iscintelligence.com/event.php?id=5>

The draft Council conclusions on the new approaches for the efficient support of European Research and Innovation are available under:

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st08/st08335.en10.pdf>

First Joint Programming initiative on Alzheimer and other neurodegenerative diseases

On 15 April, the European Commission (EC) launched the first of the new European Union Joint Programming initiatives on combating Neurodegenerative Diseases (JPND) with a particular emphasis on Alzheimer’s disease. This new initiative will serve as a pilot experience for research efforts in other areas.

In July 2008, the EC published a Communication launching the idea of Joint Programming initiatives to address common “grand challenges” that need effectively coordinated actions (see Synopsis 2008/7). One year later, in July 2009, and according to the Council’s conclusions on Joint Programming of December 2008, the EC tabled the proposal to have neurodegenerative diseases as a first action for a Joint Programming initiative (see Synopsis 2009/7). Its current realization, though, clearly misses the expectation of the Council that wanted it to be implemented already in 2009 (Synopsis 2008/10).

Neurodegenerative diseases, like Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s or Huntington’s disease, has been chosen as pilot initiative under great lobbying of the French presidency because they affect greatly the European population and economy. In fact, these diseases are strongly linked with age, given that elderly persons are at higher risk and the share of the European population over 65 steadily grows (currently it amounts to 16% and is expected to reach 25% by 2030). Moreover, treatment is particularly expensive and mainly limited to fight the symptoms instead of tackling the causes. Therefore, the ultimate goals of this initiative are understanding the causes of these diseases,

developing medical tools to identify and treat them, improving the social care and structures to assist patients, their family and health service providers.

25 European countries, including Switzerland, decided to work together on this collaborative research initiative bringing together scientific competencies, medical strengths and social approaches to tackle this challenge. The JPND will start by developing and then implementing a strategic agenda, encompassing the needed basic, clinical and social research, as well as proposing ways of pooling expertise and resources. The EC supports the initiative through coordinating actions and with a contribution of €2 million. It will hence continue launching activities that are complementary to the work of the JPND.

More information is available under: <http://www.neurodegenerationresearch.eu>

Publications

Consultation on the EDCTP programme to tackle HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis

On 8 April, the European Commission opened a public consultation on the European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) programme, which will close on 15 June 2010.

The EDCTP was created in 2003 in accordance with art.169 (newly art.185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union according to the Lisbon Treaty). It is based on a partnership between European and sub-Saharan African countries, and includes Switzerland. Its aim is to address the needs of sub-Saharan Africa in the field of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis and to integrate existing research from different European Member States in this field. EDCTP supports projects combining clinical trials, capacity building and networking.

The purpose of the consultation is to gather views and opinions on the impact and future of the EDCTP programme from public authorities, experts active in the field and the wider public.

More information about the EDCTP project can be found under: <http://www.edctp.org>

The public consultation is running under the following link:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/consultations/edctp/consultation_en.htm

Best practice guidelines for EU project website

The European Commission has made some recommendations in the form of guidelines on how best to design the structure and contents of EU funded project websites. These guidelines outline the basic website frames resulting from best practices. This is the answer of the Commission to the growing creation of numerous project websites lacking coherence and actuality. The aim is to improve the quality and user-friendliness of project websites in order to trigger higher popularity, as well as to increase the visibility for the projects and the European Commission through a more standardized format.

The recommendations refer to a broad range of aspects from the choice of an intuitive URL to the necessary or superfluous features. An example for a clear organizational chart is provided, as well as a proposal for the minimal content of a “Media” area or some “Case Studies”.

These guidelines have been produced for the thematic area “Environment”, but can also be useful for research projects in other fields.

Link to the guidelines:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/pdf/project_website_guidelines_en.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none

Dossier: Valencia Conference on Public-Private Partnerships: Celebrating success!

The European Economic Recovery Plan of Commission President Barroso set the ground for the first three EU Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in research. One PPP was set-up in the construction field (Energy-efficient Buildings), one in the automotive industry (Green Cars) and one in manufacturing industry (Factories of the Future). The plan, endorsed by the European Council in December 2008, was the basis for three special PPP calls, published in summer 2009 within the ordinary FP7 calls.

According to the European Commission, five points distinguish PPPs: 1. They aim at increasing Europe's industrial competitiveness; 2. They address those industrial sectors mostly affected by the crisis; 3. In PPPs the European Commission and industry act together; 4. PPPs take place within the framework of FP7 calls and therefore add no new rules; 5. PPPs are aiming at the development of clean technologies.

A conference, organized by the Spanish EU Presidency in Valencia from 12 to 16 April, took stock of the achievements of the first call of PPPs. Moreover, PPPs were discussed at the Conference as an instrument for leveraging private investment in R&D. Finally, a forth PPP on Future Internet was launched.

All in all, the overall tenor at the conference was positive and the European Commission as well as the involved industry congratulated each other for the smooth implementation of this new tool in research funding. PPPs were considered as much less burdensome as the setting-up of new Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI). Indeed, the creation of new JTIs within FP8 and based on the three existing PPPs was hardly mentioned during the conference.

The first year of the three PPPs was seen as a success and in particular as an example of good cooperation between different Directorate Generals as well as with industry. Industrial research associations have collected inputs from various industrial branches for each PPP, a work that otherwise would have needed to be done by the Commission. Furthermore, industry and especially SME participation in the first call seems to be pleasingly high. However, it was also stated that the real impact of the PPPs still has to be shown. First and foremost, this means the implementation of the research results in an industrial setting. This step will be decisive for the future use of the PPP tool within FP8.

It was said several times that transparency is an important issue in PPPs. Particularly the European Commission stressed the point that there is some room for flexibility when it comes to assigning responsibility between the public and the private side in PPPs, but that in the end it has to be very clear who is responsible for what. The message behind this can be interpreted that for future JTIs also new models could apply, replacing the currently used one which is based on EU regulation. Suggestions like this have been recently proposed by the industry driven JTI Sherpa Group (see Synopsis 2010/3). However, some of the proposals would probably face opposition from some Member States (see for example the Spanish Non-Paper on the conference website indicated below).

Some panelists stressed that not so much research is a problem in Europe, but the transformation of R&D results into marketable products. It was therefore repeatedly said at the conference that combining new knowledge with application is not enough and that a third force would be needed, pulling prototypes as soon as possible to the market. This idea, referring to demand-side policy measures, will most likely become a key element of the future EU innovation and research policy, for which a new research and innovation plan has been announced for autumn (see article above). In this context, the conference also made clear that the European Investment Bank (EIB) plays an important role in financing both, the research part as well as demand side measures. This happens in particular in the automotive industry for which the EIB provides currently important sums for financing, amounting to more than €8 billion in 2009 (compared to €1.5 billion in 2008) for the development of new cars. However, as a representative of the EIB stressed at the Conference, most of the EIB investments go currently to the

development of conventional engines and not to green car projects. A Communication of the European Commission on green vehicles, released two weeks after the conference on 28 April 2010, sets out a strategy to support the creation of a clean and energy efficient transport system in the EU. This strategy combines research funding (mainly Green Car PPP and Fuel Cells and Hydrogen JTI) with measures to foster the uptake of green vehicles and transport systems by the market.

The scope of the Green Car initiative seems not to be fully defined for the moment. Even if the electric car is often mentioned as the future European green car, some participants of the Valencia conference countered that the overall goal of the initiative is decarbonisation of transport, in which the electric car could play a role, but maybe also other concepts such as the hydrogen car. Effectively, it is disputable if someone claims today to be able to decide which technology will be the most profitable and efficient in 30 years time. Thus, industry reminded at the conference that the green car could be a chance for Europe, but only if the EU does not overrule the transition from conventional cars to more environmental friendly transportation.

The next calls for the PPPs will come out in July 2010. The Directorates General for Research, Information Society and Media, and Energy and Transport of the European Commission will hold an information day for the second PPP call in Brussels. This is expected to take place on 9 July 2010.

More information on the conference in Valencia including the presentations can be found on the conference website:

<http://www.r2sconference.eu/index.php>

On 28 April the European Commission released a Communication on green and energy efficient vehicles:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/automotive/files/pagesbackground/competitiveness/com-2010-186_en.pdf

CIP is often confusing and has poor visibility, interim evaluation says

At the beginning of March, at a relatively early stage, the interim evaluation of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) has been published (like FP7 the CIP is also running until 2013).

CIP was adopted in October 2006 with a budget of €3.6 billion for the period 2007 to 2013 and comprises three main pillars: the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (EIP), the Information Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme (ICT-PSP), and the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme (IEE). ICT-PSP and IEE already existed before.

According to the main findings of the evaluation, there is a common misunderstanding regarding the intervention logic of CIP: many national representatives did not understand that the CIP is primarily aiming at creating enabling conditions and a supportive framework for SMEs to flourish and to be innovative, but not to support SMEs directly. CIP is indeed not an expenditure-oriented programme like FP7 or the Cohesion Funds, but one that aims at leveraging its ideas and products into other policies and programmes, like a catalyst for further investment in innovation. Other findings of the report are as follows:

- The annual work programmes of the CIP are difficult to follow and they do not always clearly articulate the link between individual measures and the overall programme goal (which is to increase European competitiveness and innovation capacity). Often Member State representatives say that they do not understand the process behind the drafting of the work programmes. The CIP is for them therefore rather confusing and “does not give out one message about what it does and who it is for”. The creation of a single framework programme comprising three different pillars is not perceived as an enhancement, as Member State representatives “rarely understood the concept of CIP as an entity” and “were of the opinion that the three pillars exist” but that “there is little interaction between them.”

- CIP includes a number of intervention instruments that are rather complex. This makes it difficult to develop indicators to monitor progress. The report concludes that there is a lack of appropriate indicators to monitor the programme.
- The leverage effect of the CIP should be stronger as well as its link with other EU programmes. Furthermore, the administrative burden is too high in all three pillars.
- The current governance structure of CIP is not working as effectively as it should. It fails in particular in providing a strategic steer to the programme. Furthermore, the Commission should provide more feedback on practical results and achievements reached in CIP. The overall visibility of CIP is poor among national stakeholders, according to the evaluation report.

The report makes some recommendations for improvement:

- Although evidence on results is so far limited, the CIP should focus in the future on the following instruments and activities: Enterprise Europe Network; financial instruments; mutual policy learning; eco-innovation market replication projects; ICT-PSP Pilot A projects. Administrative arrangements have to be simplified for all pillars.
- Better monitoring indicators should be developed, including results and impact indicators. High level thematic indicators and targets should be created, relating to priorities and themes like innovation and competitiveness.
- The Commission should develop a communication and dissemination strategy for the CIP. Particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring that emerging results and lessons are well disseminated and can lever effective changes in innovation policy and practice of participating countries.
- A future CIP could include an “open priority” analogous to Future and Emerging Technologies under FP7 which would provide funding for relevant projects that may not fit under specified CIP themes.

The full interim evaluation report can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/cip/files/docs/interim_evaluation_report_march2010_en.pdf

ENIAC Joint Undertaking became autonomous from European Commission

On 6 May the European Commission has granted autonomy to the ENIAC Joint Undertaking (JU), a body created by some EU Member States together with the European Commission and industry in order to bring together European research in nanoelectronics. A call for proposals is currently open for submissions till 30 July 2010.

Other JU that became earlier autonomous from the European Commission are ARTEMIS (embedded systems), Clean Sky (aeronautics research) and IMI (Innovative Medicine Initiative).

More information on ENIAC can be found on this website:

<http://www.eniac.eu/index.php>

Publications

New subgroup of Innovation Commissioners has to be confirmed by Barroso

Innovation is the flavour of the day in Brussels. However, EU policy in this area was split between a dozen or so separate Directorate Generals until November 2009, when Commission President Barroso nominated Ireland's Màire Geoghegan-Quinn as the EU's first innovation, research and science Commissioner. The need to streamline EU innovation policy goes together with the new research and innovation strategy, expected to be published this autumn as one out of seven flagship initiatives of Europe 2020, the EU's new economic strategy.

A committee, chaired by Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn, will work on the new innovation strategy. The final composition of this innovation Commissioners subgroup still has to be confirmed by Commission President Barroso, but most likely the group will include Commissioners Tajani (DG Industry and Entrepreneurship), Hahn (DG Regional Policy), Andor

(DG Employment), Kroes (DG Digital Agenda), Vassiliou (DG Education), Barnier (DG Internal Market) and Oettinger (DG Energy).

The group will also feed into the debate on how to measure the effectiveness of EU spending for R&D. For this aim, a team of Commission staff is currently working with economists and business people to design a new “innovation indicator”, which will be included in the above mentioned research and innovation plan to come out in autumn.

Some information on the framework of the future research and innovation plan are given in a roadmap document of the European Commission:

http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/docs/11_entr_research_innovation_en.pdf

More information on Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn and her efforts to streamline innovation can be found on her website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/geoghegan-quinn/headlines/speeches/2010/20100305_innovation_summit_en.htm

Swiss among Europe's 2010 top innovation prize winners

On 28 April the European Commission and the European Patent Office (EPO) awarded the 2010 European Inventor of the Year awards. Among the five prize winners also a Swiss was honoured. Swiss engineer Albert Markendorf, together with Raimund Loser (Germany) won the prize in the category “Industry” for the development of a three-dimensional scanning and measuring system, precise to the millimetre.

When the scanners were introduced to the market in 2004, they met with an overwhelming response: Swiss company Leica Geosystems, for which it has been developed, sold more than 1500 units within the first year.

The automotive industry, including leading companies such as Audi, Daimler and Toyota, now makes up half of the system's customer base. The system can measure up to nine cars in one session, ten times more than previous solutions. Major aerospace companies like Boeing and Airbus also use the hand-held devices.

More information on this new device as well as on the other prize winners can be found on the EPO website:

<http://www.epo.org/topics/innovation-and-economy/european-inventor.html>

◆ Education

Delay for new education targets for 2020

The Communication of the European Commission (EC) on the Europe 2020 strategy published on 3 March 2010 (Synopsis 2010/2) presents two benchmarks and one flagship initiative for education.

The target for education aims at reducing the school dropout rate to under 10% and at raising the quota of people aged 30-34 with a higher education degree up to at least 40%. The European Council has endorsed the overall new strategy in its conclusion in March. It abstained however from setting numerical targets, these to be discussed by the Council of Education Ministers on 10 and 12 May. The final decision is therefore postponed until 17 June, when the final approval of the Europe 2020 strategy and the setting for national targets by the European Council is scheduled.

The “Youth on the Move” flagship initiative has been put forward in the Europe 2020 strategy to develop an economy based on knowledge and innovation. It states two major educational goals for the European Union by 2020, namely enhancing the performance of education systems and facilitating the entry of young people to the labour market.

Parallel, the Communication also named the “Youth on the Move” initiative that will be launched in June by Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou and aims at finalizing and making more concrete the respective flagship initiative. This forthcoming initiative will pursue four lines of action: promoting the performance and the attractiveness of higher education, strengthening the lifelong learning system, encouraging transnational learning mobility for all young people, as well as fostering young people’s participation to society to improve their employment situation.

In 2014 a new generation of programmes will start, aimed at supporting the Youth on the Move flagship initiative and its objectives. In particular, the “Commission Work Programme 2010” (see article p. 2) envisions merging the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Youth in Action Programme in one single programme in order to concentrate the effort on reaching the ambitious educational targets as set in the Europe 2020 strategy.

The challenges related to education are multiple. Education affects not only all different stages of the individuals’ education, from primary school over vocational education and training (VET) to university; but it also involves several actors at local, national and European level, e.g. civil society, educational institutions, ministries and the EC. Moreover it is a national – and sometimes even regional – competence, whereas the EU has only supporting competence. This makes the coordination at European level even more difficult and hampered. In spite of these challenges, the European added value in this area remains unquestioned and the efforts from all the stakeholders are constantly renewed, which indicate that the European Council should smoothly find an agreement on the Europe 2020 targets in June.

The conclusions of the European Council on the Europe 2020 strategy can be found under: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/113591.pdf

The Roadmap of the “Youth on the Move” initiative can be found under:

http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/docs/12_eac_youth_on_the_move_communication_en.pdf

Distant learning as recipe for more mobility

Distant learning is one of the major objectives in the European educational environment. Not only the “Youth on the Move” initiative stresses this aspect (see article above) but this is also an important issue for the Bologna reform and the European Higher Education Area (see Synopsis 2010/3). In fact, one of the targets of the latter one is to have 20% of graduating students with a study or training period abroad by 2020 (see Synopsis 2009/4).

Several actions have been undertaken by different actors to support international student mobility; one example is “Virtual Erasmus”. This project is based on the European Portal for International Courses and Services (EPICS) and backed by several national distant learning institutions. According to this project virtual mobility should supplement the physical mobility, enabling people of all ages to participate in international academic “mobility” in spite of difficulties related to family, work or physical disabilities. In fact through the EPICS database, universities can find and select e-learning courses from other universities that fit in their programmes and give the students the possibility to acquire ECTS points with the distant learning system from institutions of higher education abroad without leaving the home institution.

This project aims openly at supporting the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission and in particular its key objectives of increasing the participation in lifelong learning and the international student mobility.

More information on Virtual Erasmus can be found under: <http://www.eadtu.eu/epics>

Publications

Skills in Europe: a ten year forecast

CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, has published a medium-term forecast up to 2020 on “Skills supply and demand in Europe”. In relation with the agenda “New skills for new jobs”, CEDEFOP tries to estimate the future changing skill demand and supply in Europe.

It analyses data from the 27 Member States, Norway and Switzerland and presents them in several tables and figures. It also considers the impact of the financial crisis of 2008 on job creation. The findings show a continued trend towards a more highly qualified workforce, jobs' increase in tertiary sector and a consequent higher demand for higher- and medium-level qualification.

The study calls upon Europe to bring together the sectors of education and work in order to consolidate the optimal acquisition and utilization of skills. It also warns against the problems related to underutilization of skills and competences for individuals, employers and society, which is potentially higher than those of overqualification.

The forecast can be found under: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/Files/3052_en.pdf

◆ SwissCore Küche

Information exchange among IGLO members

SwissCore is a member of the Informal Group of RTD Liaison Offices in Brussels since 1996. Currently 23 offices from 21 countries are part of IGLO, which aims at facilitating and enhancing the interaction, information exchange and cooperation between members of IGLO, their national research systems and the European institutions in the R&D field.

This year's IGLO annual reception took place on 21 April in Brussels, giving all IGLO offices the opportunity to meet with the different contacts and networks within the European institutions and other circles. John Bell, Head of the Cabinet of the current Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science Maire Geoghegan-Quinn, gave an overview of the current and future priorities in these fields. Research and innovation policy will embrace the next generation of EU programmes, which might result to a new set-up of European programme after 2014. John Bell mentioned the Communication on innovation and research strategy to be published in September as first step in this direction.

On the same day, IGLO organised an IGLO “ERA in Action” event on FP6 and FP7 audits bringing together national experts designated by the members of IGLO. As many participants could not attend the event due to the air traffic conditions caused by the Icelandic volcano, the workshop might be repeated this fall.

More information on IGLO under: <http://www.iglortd.org>