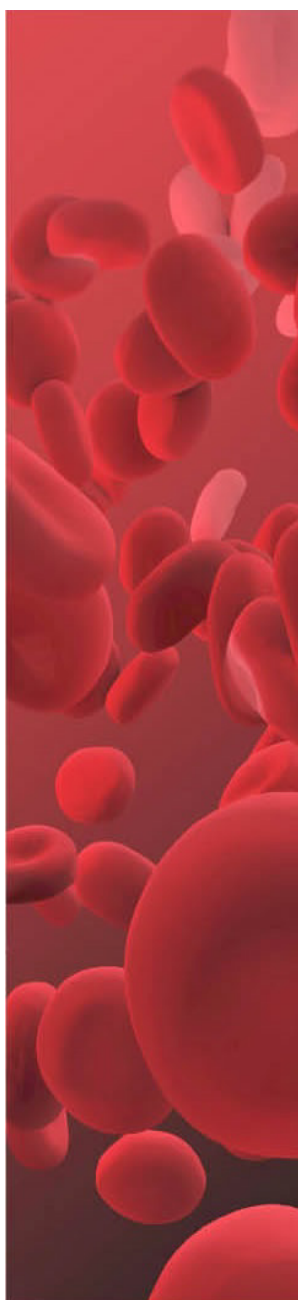


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SEEN FROM BRUSSELS

Rifts over the EU 2011 budget and EU patents

Throughout the month of November, it didn't look as if the EU would get its 2011 budget on time. The European Parliament (EP) and the Council of the European Union had failed to reach a compromise in a number of areas. One point of disagreement was on the level by which the 2011 budget should be increased compared to 2010. Some Member States (MS) called for a cap on the increase with which the EP did not agree. Another issue was the funding for ITER, the experimental nuclear reactor currently under construction in the South of France, which has largely overshot its original costs.

The negotiations finally broke down on 15 November, when the EP refused to drop its demand for more influence in the post-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework. This prompted the European Commission (EC) to present a new proposal for the 2011 budget on 26 November. With a 2.9% increase compared to the 2010 budget, the new draft by the EC foresees a lower increase than the original proposal of 5.9%. If the budget is not approved by the end of the year, the EU would be forced to operate on a **provisional month-by-month budget**. This could have implications for all programmes including in the area of research and innovation. At the time of writing however, the EP and the Council seemed close to a final agreement.

The Competitiveness Council of the European Union, which groups Ministers in charge of Industry and Research from the 27 MS, met in Brussels on 10 November. Among other topics, the Ministers had also tried to find a solution to the issue of an EU patent. Despite the efforts of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the attempt to find a **compromise on the language rules of the patent failed** – yet again. In order

to reduce the costs of patenting in Europe, which are ten times higher than in the US and Japan, the EC had presented a proposal in July 2010 which proposed to maintain English, French and German as official languages for an EU patent (see Synopsis 2010/7). This proposal met strong opposition from some MS, including Spain and Italy. After the meeting, it became clear that the negotiations had reached a serious impasse. In the aftermath of the failed negotiations a group of eleven countries decided to sign a common patent agreement based on a pact of "enhanced cooperation". The enhanced cooperation pact needs the support of at least 9 MS and would allow them to sidestep blocking MS and to go ahead with a **single patent even without unanimous support**. While Italy and Poland remain opposed to an EU patent with the proposed language rules, Spain has already signalled that it would not insist that Spanish should be an official patent language.

The European Research Council (ERC) has announced that it will abort the ongoing process of merging the positions of Secretary-General of the ERC and of Director of the ERC Executive Agency (ERCEA). Instead of appointing a new Director General for the unified position, the ERC has announced that it will set up a **task force to explore long-term solutions** for the governance of the ERC. The task force will be led by Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General of the DG Research and Innovation and will include representatives of the ERC's Scientific Council. The task force should take up its work before the end of this year.

Accordingly, the position of Secretary-General, that has been left vacant after Prof. Andreu Mas-Colell resigned in September, will be filled again. The ERC's

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Scientific Council has started to interview suitable candidates and should announce an appointment in the following weeks. At the same time, one of the candidates of the aborted recruitment process for the Director position has expressed public dissatisfaction with the way the process was handled and has asked the European Ombudsman to examine a possible lack of transparency.

The ERC, which enjoys a very good reputation among stakeholders and received a very positive assessment in the FP7 interim evaluation (see article below), should resolve the issue of its governance quickly. Meanwhile, the ERC has also announced that the first call for its newly introduced **"proof of concept" scheme will be launched in February 2011**. The proof of concept call will be open to all ERC grantees that want to commercialize their work's results. The grantees will be able to apply for a maximum amount of €150'000 to be used over 12 months.

The EC presented its new Energy Strategy 2020 on 10 November, which

calls for €1 trillion of investment in Europe's energy network. The Strategy, which is in line with the climate and energy related goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy, sets priorities in five areas:

- curb energy consumption
- create an integrated pan-European energy market
- formulate a coordinated energy policy towards neighbouring and non-European countries
- securing Europe's leadership in energy technology and innovation
- protect energy consumers by enhancing transparency

The response from industry and policy makers has been mixed so far, with some actors voicing concern about unrealistic goals and the lack of concrete measures. The EC is expected to begin the implementation of its Energy Strategy 2020 by proposing legislative initiatives within the next 18 months.

[Press release on Competitiveness Council meeting of 10 November 2010 \(pdf\)](#) 

[The ERC announcement on governance task force \(pdf\)](#) 

[The Energy 2020 Strategy](#) 

RESEARCH

Focus: Interim evaluation of FP7

In accordance with article 7.2 of the FP7 Decision (1982/2006/EC), an evidence-based interim evaluation of FP7 has been carried out by an independent group of experts and its results were published on 19 November 2010. The overall assessment is that **FP7 is on course** and makes a significant contribution to European science and to the development of the European Research Area (ERA). However, **the full potential has not been reached**. The report yields few surprises and makes a sober

and balanced evaluation of FP7 and its components.

The principle of excellence is generally being achieved throughout FP7 (the average evaluation score of proposals in the Cooperation themes is 13.1 out of 15). The expert group finds that in the Cooperation programme the quality of the project proposals is high and there is robust competition for funding. The report is clear in stating that without it, the cross-border component of research would be diminished. However, the

report recommends that the Cooperation programme should use **more bottom-up proposals and more broadly defined topics** in the calls.

The ERC is considered to be a success. Despite being relatively new, it manages to attract and fund world-class researchers. The Risk-Sharing Financial Facility (RSFF) was evaluated positively as well and is considered a promising means of leveraging additional funding for investment in infrastructures and complementing grants with loans (see also article below).

The People programme with its Marie Curie Actions makes a valuable contribution to the development of human capital of researchers. According to the expert group, the programme is flexible, well structured and the instruments are broad and inclusive. Some rebalancing of resources within the People programme is recommended to enhance its impact and achieve higher success rates.

The evaluation states that FP7 is also having a positive effect on Research Infrastructures (RI). The report suggests that more emphasis should be given to RI in the future and appropriate levels of funding should be allocated, also by using the Structural Funds.

The administrative burdens in FP7 projects continue despite simplification efforts. There are too many disproportionate procedures and a lack of flexibility. A more **radical approach to simplification** is recommended. In particular, the risk-trust balance needs to be redressed, notes the report. The current risk-averse culture is inhibiting participation. Although the average time to grant (the average amount of time it takes from the end of a call to the signing of a grant contract) of about 1 year (350 days) is assessed to be in line with national practices, there is still room for improvement, especially regarding differences between Directorates General.

Better coordination of research between the Member States and EU levels still

needs to be achieved. The evaluation report states that creating common pot funding has met important difficulties and effective solutions need to be found, also in light of further development of Joint Programming. The report recommends doing more to foster capacity building in the less successful Member States using other EU instruments such as the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

The expert group makes several recommendations for the remaining period of FP7. Among them, that research efforts should increasingly be focused on solving grand societal challenges. This is one recommendation that the European Commission (EC) will be glad to find in the report, since it is in line with the overall approach of the Innovation Union Initiative and the proposed European Innovation Partnerships.

The expert group at the same time stresses the **role of industry** as a bridge between research and commercialization. SMEs have to be better recognized as performers of research and not just as consumers. To increase participation of industry and SMEs, the EC should drastically reduce the administrative burden of participation. The experts recognize that Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs) present problems (some JTIs more than others) with the consistency of their legal structure and procedures, their handling of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and cost coverage, especially with regards to overhead rates.

Another recommendation made in the report is a **moratorium on introducing new instruments** before they have been proven to work in an effective way. This recommendation reflects the positions of many stakeholders, also regarding the next Framework Programme FP8.

In the annex, the report includes a list of the top 50 institutional beneficiaries, who received close to 25% of FP7 funding awarded so far. Among the 50 are 4

Swiss institutions: EPFL (6), ETHZ (9), University of Zurich (35) and University of Geneva (38). Also, a separate top 50 of industrial beneficiaries is included without Swiss representation.

A formal response by the EC to the report is expected in January 2011. The European Parliament and the Council of the EU will also discuss the interim evaluation at the beginning of next year.

[The FP7 interim evaluation report \(pdf\)](#) 

Good grade for the Risk-Sharing Finance Facility

The Risk-Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF) has been assessed during spring 2010 after three years of existence. According to the FP7 Decision (1982/2006/EC), an evaluation of RSFF was scheduled in 2010, in order to release the second half of the budget devoted to this instrument by the European Commission (EC). The final report of the evaluation, produced by an external group of six independent experts, was officially published last November, as part of the FP7 interim evaluation (see article above).

The RSFF was set up at the beginning of FP7 in 2007, in order to support the access to debt finance of innovative firms and organisations undertaking risky R&D projects with expected returns of value. The RSFF instrument has a total budget of €2 billion for the period 2007-2013, jointly carried by the EC and the European Investment Bank (EIB) for €1 bio each. This amount should enable the EIB to lend more than €10 billion (see Synopsis 2007/1 and 2008/4).

The expert group is **highly positive about the first implementation phase of the RSFF** in its report and their recommendations reflect this positive approach. The experts request the Council and the European Parliament to release immediately the rest of the EC contribution for the remaining years of FP7 (€ 500 million), as the RSFF results have exceeded initial expectations by more than 40%. After 2013, the scope and the volume of the risk-based financing should be increased as a

stronger and more visible part of FP8, given that RSFF could significantly contribute to the development of the new Innovation Union Strategy. The experts recommend that no less than €5 billion, added to the released capital of current repaid RSFF loans, should be dedicated to support RDI projects. At this stage, projects funded by the RSFF are located in 18 Member States & 2 FP7 Associated Countries and are concentrated in the sectors of Renewable Energy Technologies, Engineering/ Industry, Life Science and ICT. **61% of the total amount of the loans goes to large companies.** Until now only 21% of the available money profited the mid-caps and SMEs, implying that partnering banks would need to provide smaller indirect loans (for less than €7.5 mio.). A minor percentage of the loans (5%) goes to Research Infrastructure (RI) projects, universities or research organisations. As recommended by the experts, improvements should be introduced to increase the support to these target groups (SME and RI) through the introduction of specific approaches and change of risk-sharing till 2013. The success of the instrument as mentioned by the experts has not been translated into concrete actions in Switzerland yet as **no single Swiss institution is currently beneficiary of the RSFF.** Contacts with national banks have been made in Switzerland, in order to ease access to those loans also for smaller entities.

[More information on RSFF](#) 

[The report of the expert group \(pdf\)](#) 

[Presentation of the main findings for the European Parliament \(pdf\)](#) 

Marie Curie Career Integration Grant

The European Commission's Marie Curie Fellowships, which encourage mobility of researchers within the European Research Area (ERA), met some organisational changes. Two of the schemes, the European Reintegration Grants (ERGs) and the International Reintegration Grants (IRGs) were **merged and rebranded into the Career Integration Grants (CIG)**. The new action, part of FP7's "people" programme, aims at supporting researchers in establishing themselves in Europe with their own research budget. With this the CIGs contribute to the permanent integration of researchers that are taking up a **stable research**

position in Europe, for example after a period of mobility.

CIG applicants must have a PhD or at least four years research experience. They can have any nationality, but must comply with the mobility rule, and cannot have carried out their work in the country of their host institution for more than twelve months over the last three years. The grant comprises a flat-rate contribution of **€25'000 per year** towards research costs and covers a period of two to four years. The first CIG Call is open since 20 October 2010, with two deadlines on 8 March and 6 September 2011.

[More information on the Marie Curie Career Integration Grant](#) 

> Publications

Voluntary guidelines for Joint Programming activities

Joint Programming is an idea that has been introduced by the European Commission in July 2008 as one out of five steps to build the European Research Area (ERA) (see Synopsis 2008/7). Joint Programming should help Member States to coordinate national research activities, bundle their resources, benefit from complementarities and develop common research agendas.

In autumn 2008, the Competitiveness Council called for a first pilot Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) on combating neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's. Switzerland is taking part in this pilot JPI (see Synopsis 2008/10, 2009/7 and 2010/4).

To further implement JPIs, a High Level Group for Joint Programming (GPC) was created. The GPC's first task has been to identify and define the thematic fields for the first JPIs, and to contribute to the preparation of Council decisions on JPIs. The Group identified the first topics for JPIs in November 2009, and a second wave in May 2010.

On 4 November 2010, the GPC agreed on Voluntary guidelines on framework conditions for joint programming in research which have been welcomed by the Competitiveness Council on 26

November. The Competitiveness Council recommends to Member States to use these guidelines but also to review them regularly. The guidelines cover the following activities:

- Peer review procedures
- Forward Looking Activities
- Evaluation of joint programmes
- Funding of cross-border research
- Optimal dissemination and use of research findings
- Protection, management and sharing of intellectual property rights (IPR)

For each of the above activities, a subgroup of the GPC has been in charge, building on the experience and best practices of national funding agencies on those issues (for example the D-A-CH Lead Agency Scheme is mentioned among the peer review procedures). These framework conditions define a common approach for the issues that are considered to be important for the implementation of JPIs. They should be flexible and adaptable, taking into account the future development of JPIs.

[The Voluntary guidelines for JP \(pdf\)](#) 

> RESEARCH

Consultation on a new classification for research career

By Christine Poupa, Euresearch Regional Office St. Gallen

The ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility and its Working Group on Skills prepared a draft document "Towards a European Framework for Research Careers" defining five broad categories that describe different career profiles for researchers:

- New Researcher
- Recognised Researcher
- Established Researcher
- Leading Researcher
- Star Researcher

The aim of this initiative is to contribute towards an open and transparent internal labour market for researchers in Europe. This European Framework for Research Careers is expected to provide a common language to a wide variety of actors across the continent and beyond, as it describes the competences of researchers in order to make them comparable.

The first category, "New Researcher", for example, corresponds with the highest levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF level 8) and of Bologna (third cycle). This category includes researchers in training, new doctoral candidates or early career research assistants. Someone new to research would normally progress to the next category "Recognised Researcher" after having demonstrated the capacity to conduct research. A Leading Researcher (forth category) is a team leader of a research group or head of an industry R&D laboratory. He/she has an international reputation in his/her field and makes a substantial contribution (breakthroughs) to his/her research field. The European Commission invites all stakeholders to send their comments, questions or suggestions to this draft before 1 February 2011. Swiss comments were already sent by the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SER) at the end of September. One of the questions raised is who will classify the researcher and how the (re)assessment will proceed?

[The new proposed classification for research career \(pdf\)](#) 

INNOVATION

SME participation on the right track?

On 16 November 2010, DG Research and Innovation released the sixth progress report on SME participation in FP7. The cumulative figure for the EU contribution to SMEs in the Themes of the Cooperation Programme is only 14.7% at the moment. However, when looking at the number of Grant Agreements signed between 1 January 2010 and 1 October 2010, 15.4% of the budget was allocated to SMEs (€1'544 million out of €10'477 million). Moreover, out of 33'000 participations, 5'500 were SMEs (16.7%). The size of an average FP7 consortium has been 11 partners, with 1.8 SMEs. According to the report, **about 11'000 organisations have participated so**

far in FP7, many of which are involved in more than one FP7 Grant Agreement. SMEs represent 35.4% of these unique participating entities, which is the highest single group participating in FP7. At least **20'000 SMEs are expected to benefit from FP7** before the end of the programme and the total contribution to SMEs is expected to amount to €6 billion. For the first time, the report includes a comprehensive analysis of the activity sectors represented in the different FP7 Themes. With the exception of manufacturing SMEs in the Social Sciences and Humanities Theme, all activity sectors are represented in all Themes. For instance, ICT companies

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play an important role in Themes such as Transport, NMP and Security, as well of course in the ICT Theme.

Thus everything seems to fall into place for SME participation. However, the expert group in charge of the FP7 interim evaluation (see article above) notes that the official EU definition of SMEs (EC Recommendation 2003/C 118/03 stemming from a Council Decision in 2003) and used for FP7 is one which embraces more than the conventional notion of a small business driven by an entrepreneur, as it "includes certain not-for-profit organisations which appear to have the character of non-governmental organisations, rather than businesses." Moreover, the FP7 interim evaluation concludes that SMEs have a success rate of only 17% compared to 20% for all applicants. But most important, **the participation rate of SMEs does not**

reflect the actual exploitation of results nor the global competitiveness of SMEs.

Unfortunately, there is no data available about the innovation power of SMEs that have taken part in FP7, nor about the extent to which projects in FP7 have resulted in the creation of new high-tech firms.

In this regard, the 15% target is rather unhelpful and even arbitrary. Or in the words of the expert group: "More attention should be paid to the quality and constructive engagement of SME participation rather than just widening it. In this way, the key role of SMEs as the bridge from pre-competitive research to innovation could be enhanced." Can purely quantitative goals for SME participation like the 15% target really serve the purpose?

[The autumn report on SME participation \(pdf\)](#) 

Conference on Active and Healthy Ageing

A novelty announced in the new EU innovation strategy "Innovation Union" is the idea of European Innovation Partnerships with a first pilot on ageing which is suppose to start in 2011 (see Synopsis 2010/8 and Synopsis 2010/9). The partnerships, called "Active and Healthy Ageing Innovation Partnership" (AHAIP), should foster close **cooperation across different policies covering public health, research, digital and industrial policy.**

The aim of this first partnership is, by 2020, to enable citizens to live longer independently in good health by **increasing the average number of healthy years by two.** In achieving this target, the sustainability and efficiency of the social and healthcare systems, which are under stress in many EU countries, could be improved (with people being able to work longer and being healthier and more independent after their

retirement). Finally, an EU and global market for innovative products and services with new opportunities for EU business could be created.


A first conference on the AHAIP took place in Brussels on 26 November. Led by the two Commissioners Dalli (Health) and Kroes (Digital Agenda), DG Research and Innovation played a rather insignificant role.

On the same day, a **public consultation** was launched by the European Commission (EC) which will be open until 28 January 2011. With this consultation, the EC aims at gathering further detailed information on existing national, regional and local initiatives with similar goals which could be scaled-up in AHAIP later on. But the consultation will also collect preliminary ideas for completely new actions, where innovation in active and healthy ageing solutions could have an impact for citizens, healthcare systems

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and markets. According to some rumors, possible future topics for European Innovation Partnership could be Non-

Energy, Raw Materials, Smart Cities and Bioscience.

[Consultation on the EIP](#) 

Fuel Cells and Hydrogen JTI on its own two feet

After a long and rigorous process, the European Commission (EC) has granted full autonomy to the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH JU) on 15 November. According to the EC, autonomy of FCH JU comes at the right moment. Indeed, the Strategic Energy Technology plan (SET Plan) held its fourth review (15-16 November) to account for the progress in the implementation and set up of the European Industrial Initiatives, FCH JU being already the first concrete example of such industrial initiatives.

Three calls for proposals have already been launched and, in 2011, the FCH Public-Private Partnership intends to launch its **biggest call** with a budget worth nearly €220 million. It will support research projects to be selected in four application areas, namely transportation and refueling infrastructure; hydrogen

production and distribution; stationary power generation; and early markets. A fifth application area focuses on cross-cutting issues useful for several types of applications.

FCH JU was launched on 14 October 2008 (see Synopsis 2007/8 and 2008/9). Its main goal is to **speed up the development of fuel cell and hydrogen technologies in Europe** to enable their commercialization between 2010 and 2020. Current members include the EC and 64 companies, represented by the European Industry Grouping for the FCH JTI (NEW IG), as well as 54 universities and research institutes, represented by the Research Grouping N.ERGHY. The EC is putting in about €470 million for the period 2008-2013, with the other half of the funding coming from industry.

[More information on FCH JU](#) 

Consultation on future Competitiveness and Innovation Programme

On 8 November, the European Commission launched a public consultation on the possible successor to the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), which will be open until 4 February 2011. The public consultation on EU funding for competitiveness and innovation is part of a wider impact analysis and reflection on the next EU Multiannual post-2013 Financial Framework. The focus and objectives of the future programme have not been decided yet but the consultation is expected to help devise a programme that will succeed the CIP.

CIP was launched in 2007 in parallel to FP7. According to the interim evaluation (see Synopsis

2010/4), CIP has been suffering from poor visibility and especially the intervention logic of the first pillar, the Entrepreneurships and Innovation Programme, has been confusing for participants as the calls often have not give out a clear message about their objectives and target public. Also synergies between CIP and FP7 have been rather marginal so far and no increase of competitiveness could be measured.

Apart from the public consultation, stakeholders will identify new priorities during a conference on 25 January 2011.

Public consultation on future CIP 

EDUCATION

Focus: An agenda for new skills and jobs

On 23 November 2010, the European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities released its flagship initiative "An Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment". As part of the Europe 2020 strategy, this initiative complements the recently launched initiative "Youth on the Move", aiming at helping young people accessing the work market (see Synopsis 2010/8). It also gives a broader perspective to the European Commission's initiative "New Skills for New Jobs", launched in December 2008 (see Synopsis 2009/1 and 2010/2).

The aim of the initiative is to raise the **employment rate in the EU to 75%**, to increase **the percentage of young people in higher education** or equivalent vocational education **to 40%**, as well as to reduce the **early school leaving rate under 10%**, all by the year 2020. To achieve these goals, the

European Commission (EC) proposes thirteen concrete actions across four main areas:

- Make Europe's labour markets function better
- Equip people with the right skills for employment
- Improve job quality and working conditions and
- Create jobs

In order to improve the flexibility and security of the labour market, the actions propose, among other things, to reduce the existing divisions between employees holding temporary and permanent contracts and ease access to training, life-long learning and career guidance for all employees.

As incentives, the EC will launch in 2012 an online "EU skills panorama" which will forecast the skills that will be required in the future and will develop a shared

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interface between the worlds of employment, education and training. To support job creation, the EC will propose to extend and transform the preparatory action "Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE)" (see Synopsis 2009/2) into a permanent programme by the end of 2010.

The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), as well as the Marie Curie Actions of FP7, will also contribute to the objectives of the Agenda, mainly through the Erasmus placements in companies and the EU industrial PhDs. While the flagship initiative principally lays out the EU-level

actions to reach the employment target, many of the proposed actions will involve Member States as well as social partners. Implementation will be based on a mix of EU policy instruments, including legislation, policy coordination, social dialogue, funding and strategic partnerships.

The Agenda's priorities will be revised in 2014 and be adapted to the new Multiannual Financial Framework. Till then, the EC will report on progress in the Annual Growth Survey within the Europe 2020 strategy..

The flagship initiative "An Agenda for new skills and jobs" (pdf) 

FAQ on the initiative (pdf) 

Citizen's summary (pdf) 

Energy research gets European platform

A new acronym has been introduced to the European research and education landscape. EPUE stands for European Platform of Universities Engaged in Energy Research. The platform was officially launched by the European University Association (EUA) on 15 November and comprises almost 150 universities with expertise in training and research in the energy field.

EPUE is the EUA's **contribution to the EU's Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET Plan)** and is based on a consultation of all EUA member universities. Membership is still open to all universities who complete a questionnaire prepared by the EUA to assess training and research capacity in the energy related areas. EUA is currently using the initial responses to the questionnaire to map faculty expertise, collaboration with industry as

well as master and doctoral programmes. These areas can cover all disciplines from science and engineering, medical and bio-sciences, as well as social and economic sciences.

According to the EUA, the EPUE will also address key interdisciplinary research perspectives for **longer term energy challenges until 2050**. Intended as a mean of intensifying dialogue among universities and between the EUA and the European Commission, the platform is expected to create a better balance between top-down and bottom-up research and training strategies and funding approaches. All Swiss public universities are members of the EUA and can join EPUE at their discretion by participating in the mapping exercise. So far no Swiss University has joined the platform.

More information on the EPUE platform 

15 years Leonardo da Vinci

The Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) programme celebrates its 15th birthday. Since 1995 the programme helps fund vocational education and training across Europe. **600'000 young people, 110'000 trainers and 3000 projects** already profited from the EU programme. Alone in 2009, more than 80'000 trainees, apprentices and jobseekers received LdV support for a training placement abroad. The highest number of trainees came from Germany, which also counts as the most popular destination for trainees since 2000. Currently the European Commission (EC) is investing €240 million a year for vocational education and training through LdV. Part of the programme's success is due to the involvement of European regions. LdV

fosters regional cooperation amongst schools, companies and regional authorities.

The 15th anniversary of the LdV programme was marked by a high-level conference in Brussels on 9 November 2010. On this occasion the stakeholders discussed not only the experiences of the last 15 years, but also the preparation of the next generation of the programme from 2014.

In parallel with the event a **new website on mobility schemes** was launched. The EuroApprenticeship site was created as a two-year project by the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) in order to encourage mobility amongst apprentices.

[More information about the LdV programme](#) 

[The EuroApprenticeship website](#) 

> Publications

Report on Quality Assurance in higher education

The European University Association (EUA) has published a new study concerning Quality Assurance (QA) in higher education within Europe. The study, entitled "Examining Quality Culture: Quality Assurances Processes in Higher Education Processes", analyses the implementation of QA processes within European universities and how they are being used to develop a quality culture within higher education institutions. The survey compares 222 educational establishments in 36 countries and their carrying out of different schemes.

Since 2001 EUA has been meeting regularly with ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), ESIB (European Students' Union) and EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) to discuss how to develop a European dimension for QA. As a remarkable increase in QA requirements in Europe was noticed, the European Ministers for Education adopted the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in 2005 as part of the

Bologna Process. The following year the EUA and its partners, called the E4 Group, also started to organise an annual European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF).

The report of the latest QA study underlines the progress made in QA in the last few years and it points out that today the majority of European universities have fundamental policies, structures and processes in place. Nonetheless, further improvements must be made and therefore the EUA concludes its report with three recommendations:

- Institutions should be encouraged to adopt or strengthen the targeted approach on QA rather than seeking to comply with external criteria.
- Institutions should develop explicit feedback systems including strategic management and QA processes, to monitor results and quality of activities and to use them for strategic planning.
- Finally, participation of students needs to be further strengthened in the follow-up activities of QA processes and in measuring student workload.

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Within all these efforts, the EJA stresses that QA should remain a tool used to develop the quality of

institutional activities, and not become the goal itself.

[The full report \(pdf\)](#) 

Guide for apprenticeship

Toute l'Europe, the first French portal answering questions about the European Union, has recently created a useful and attractive interactive guide for apprentices. The website, launched in May 2006, provides information about EU politics in all its dimensions: political, economical, social, historical and cultural.

With the new guide, called "Apprentices: The Passport to mobility in Europe", Toute l'Europe aims at informing young people, who may be thinking about taking part in an apprenticeship scheme, of the many opportunities that are available to them, particularly through the Leonardo da Vinci

programme. The guide is available in French, German and English and contains a wealth of information, useful before, during and after a placement abroad. Beside tips on preparation, choosing a destination or coping in a new environment in a new country, the booklet also includes testimonials from young people who have already taken part in a mobility programme.

Under the heading "The European Union will pay for your trip!" the portal highly encourages young European apprentices to profit from the EU mobility schemes.

[The Guide on the website of Toute l'Europe](#) 

10 million Europass documents

Europass helps European citizens to make their knowledge, skills and competence comparable in all EU education systems and across the single European labour market. As part of a series of complementary European tools, such as the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET), Europass has been developed and launched in 2005, in the framework of enhanced cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) between the European Commission, Member States and social partners.

Europass consists of five documents:

- The Curriculum Vitae (CV), giving an overview of personal skills, acquired on the job or during leisure time
- The Language Passport, offering a self-assessment of language skills using standardised levels

- Europass Mobility, recording work and education experiences in other countries
- The Certificate Supplement, describing the content of vocational qualifications
- The Diploma Supplements, listing the achievements of diplomas or degrees

CEDEFOP, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, has been closely involved in preparing and implementing the idea of Europass and it will continue to support all stakeholders with the aim of achieving a seamless implementation of more European tools for VET and lifelong learning.

By October 2010, more than ten million Europass documents have been created online, seven million more than the target of 3 million set five years ago. With this, the use of Europass has far surpassed expectations, which clearly confirms its relevance.

[More about Europass](#) 

INTRA MUROS...

SwissCore Seminar 2010 in Brussels

By Pascal Walther, Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

More than 50 participants attended the SwissCore Seminar on 18 and 19 November 2010. The programme focused on strategic developments in research and innovation and their implications for the elaboration of FP8.

Carsten Bermig from the Secretariat-General of the European Commission opened the seminar with a presentation on the Europe 2020 strategy. The following two sessions by officials of DG Enterprise and Industry were devoted to the Innovation Union and to impulses for innovation through Key Enabling Technologies (KET). The day was concluded with presentations on developments in Research Infrastructures, current and future implementation of Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) and experiences and outlook of the ERC.

The second day started off with the interim evaluation report of FP7. This was

followed by a presentation underlining the great importance of SMEs in the Innovation Union and an address delineating measures for simplification of FP7 and FP8. Waldemar Kütt, member of the cabinet of Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, then described the next steps and first trends of the FP8 roadmap with regard to supporting Europe 2020 and ERA.

The seminar closed with an open discussion introduced by two officials from the Mission of Switzerland to the EU, Olaf Kjelsen, Deputy Head, and Balz Abplanalp, Science and Technology Counsellor. The intense discussion focused on how future EU strategies will influence the relationship with Switzerland, e.g. how to adapt to evolving EU policies and how to ensure Swiss participation in the first calls of FP8.

The programme and presentations of the SwissCore Seminar 2010 (available soon) 



Waldemar Kütt and the participants of the SwissCore Seminar 2010

Joint secondment at SwissCore

By Pascal Walther, Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)

For the first time, SwissCore organized a joint secondment for a Euresearch collaborator from the Regional Office St. Gallen, Christine Poupa, and a SNSF collaborator, Pascal Walther. The two visitors attended the SwissCore Seminar and then benefitted from a tailor-made programme.

The main focus of the programme was put on Mobility and the Social Security of Researchers (Pan-European Pension Fund) as well as on Marie Curie Actions. Visits to European Commission officials and Brussels-based liaison offices were organized. Beyond the obvious synergies that arise from such a programme, the

two participants appreciated the fruitful exchanges they had between each other and the fact that during external meetings, they could share their sometimes dissimilar experiences with the people they visited. This made it possible to convey a more complete picture of the Swiss and EU systems.

Other benefits were a better understanding of the EU programmes and processes as well as numerous important contacts. I expect these to be useful regarding the implementation of possible measures for improved support of young researchers in the framework of the SNSF fellowship programme.

SwissCore

Contact Office for European Research
Innovation and Education

SwissCore is the contact office in Brussels of the Swiss National Science Foundation, of the State Secretariat for Education and Research and of the Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology. The office is also linked to the Euresearch information network.

SwissCore follows up on the latest developments in European research, innovation and education programmes. SwissCore supports Swiss researchers in their participation in European research programmes, advises them in making contacts in Brussels and offers them a local working infrastructure (meeting rooms and offices).