

EUROPEAN SCIENCE & RESEARCH NEWS

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European science & research news

FP7 content agreed by EU Competitiveness Council

On 28 November, the EU Competitiveness Council approved by a large majority a so-called Partial General Approach on the 7th Framework Programme for research and technological development (FP7). This means that the Council agreed on the non-budget related aspects of FP7, while the funding for FP7 will have to be agreed as part of the discussion on the EU Financial Perspectives for 2007-2013. Other issues debated at the Competitiveness Council were support for small and medium-sized enterprises participation in research projects and the implementation arrangements of the future European Research Council (ERC).

See: Council Press Release 14155/05 (Presse 287), <http://ue.eu.int/Newsroom>

EU Council to reconsider R&D investment priorities

EU Commissioner Janez Potočnik told the Council that he will establish a group of experts to identify priority actions for the EU to boost its investment in research. The group will be chaired by the former Prime Minister of Finland, Esko Aho, and is set to provide recommendations on priorities for R&D activities for the spring summit of the EU Council in March 2006. See: <http://www.euractive.com>

Commission hails 2004 as successful year for European research

The Commission published its annual report on research and technological development activities for 2004, citing developments that made it, in the Commission's view, a successful year. In 2004 almost 16000 proposals were received for calls under the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) of which almost 2000 had been selected for funding. The report refers to a number of 'remarkable breakthroughs' in 2004 such as the publication of the European Strategy on Nanotechnology, a plan for implementing the second phase of the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and progress made towards implementing security research at a European level. The report notes that not enough progress had been made with regard to the Barcelona objective of increasing research investment to three per cent of GDP by 2010. For more information see: <http://cordis.europa.eu.int>

Belgium simplifies working permit regulations for foreign scientists

On 21 November the Belgian Government announced that foreign scientists will no longer need a working permit to work in Belgium as long as they are working with an official Belgian institution or at an acknowledged private research facility. The goal of the measure is to attract more foreign researchers in order to stimulate innovation and economic development in Belgium. Source: <http://www.vrtnieuws.net>

Winners of 2005 Descartes Prize for Research and Science announced

On 2 December the European Commission announced the winners of the 2005 Descartes Prize for Research and Science. Outstanding European research teams in genetics, climate change, astronomy, social sciences and disease management as well as innovative science communicators received the prestigious award from EU Commissioner Janez Potočnik at a ceremony in London. For more information see: <http://europa.eu.int>, Press Release IP/05/1524

New European Commission Director-General for Research

Following a reshuffle of senior management positions in the EU Commission, it was announced that José Manuel Silva Rodrigues (currently Director of DG Agriculture) will become new Director-General for Research. Current Director-General Achilleas Mitsos becomes special advisor to DG Research before going into retirement.

EU policy developments affecting science & research

UK proposal for EU budget cuts meets widespread criticism

The UK Presidency put forward a proposal on 5 December which would cut the EU's budget for 2007-2013 to 847 billion Euro (1.03% of EU GNI), compared to 871 billion Euro (1.06%) proposed by the Luxembourg Presidency in June 2005. The new EU members in Central and Eastern Europe would be mainly affected by the proposed cuts in structural funds which would amount to a 10% cut of their funds. The draft foresees an increased UK contribution to the EU budget, but not a total cut of the UK rebate. The UK proposal was met with widespread criticism from France, Poland and Hungary as well as from EU Commission President Barroso, who called it a 'Mini-Europe' budget. The proposal forms the basis for discussions at the EU Summit in Brussels on 15/16 December. While the UK Presidency is still hoping that a compromise can be found, many observers believe that the Austrian Presidency might have to finalise negotiations on the EU budget in the first half on 2006.

For more information see: <http://www.euractive.com>

Commission proposes comprehensive new SME policy

The European Commission has tabled proposals for a new and comprehensive policy for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), streamlining EU instruments for small businesses and creating a genuine partnership between the EU and Member States in this area. One of the main aims of the policy is to improve the growth potential of SME's, e.g. by facilitating SME participation in the 7th Framework Programme and by supporting SMEs in the field of intellectual property rights (IPR) through the EU business support networks.

To download the new policy: http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/docs/com_2005_en.pdf

Developments in thematic areas of potential relevance for Australia

GMES enters pilot phase

The European Commission launched the pilot phase of the Global Monitoring for the Environment and Security (GMES) programme on 14 November moving ahead with its plans to introduce the first earth observation services. In its Communication (COM (2005) 565) the European Commission sets out a strategy for delivering GMES. The final objective of GMES is to provide reliable and timely services related to environmental and security issues in support of public policy makers' needs. For more information see <http://www.gmes.info/>

Morocco becomes first African country to join Galileo

On 8 November negotiations were concluded on Morocco's participation in the EU's Satellite Navigation System Galileo, making it the first African country to join Galileo. See http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy_transport/galileo

Galileo headquarters compromise

The EU Council agreed on 5 December to place the administrative headquarters of Galileo in France and the operational headquarters in the UK. Germany, Italy and Spain will host Galileo control centres.

For more information see: <http://euractive.com/>

Reports on S&R events attended by DEST Europe Staff

Communicating European Research 2005, 14-15 November 2005, Brussels

The European Commission held its second major conference on communicating scientific information and promoting European research on 14/15 November 2005. The event focused on different aspects of science communication and provided a meeting place for scientists, communication professionals and journalists. Around 2100 participants met to share best practices and to define strategies to improve science communication in Europe. An exhibition featured selected EU research projects as well as communication strategies of research organisations. Dissemination networks, media associations and service providers in the field of information and communication presented their projects. Proceedings and other information can be downloaded from: www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/cer2005.html

Renewable Energy for Europe: Research in Action, 21-22 November 2005, Brussels

The conference held by the European Commission aimed to present the important role that renewable energy research plays in Europe and to enhance awareness among stakeholders of the opportunities ahead. Key European success stories were analysed and existing and planned European renewable energy technology platforms were presented. Proceedings can be accessed through: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/energy/gp/gp_events/action/article_2790_en.htm

Highlights on upcoming S&R events

Conference on Research Infrastructures in Europe, 6-7 December 2005, Nottingham

The third conference on research infrastructures is taking place in Nottingham, UK, on 6/7 December jointly organised by the British Presidency and the European Commission. See: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ecruyj/title.htm>

European conference on security research, 20/21 December 2005, Vienna

A conference on EU security research jointly organised by the Austrian EU Council Presidency and the European Commission will take place in Vienna on 20/21 February 2006. The aim of the conference is to discuss the possible shape of a new European civil security research agenda. See: <http://www.arcs.ac.at/>

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