



EUROPEAN SCIENCE & RESEARCH NEWS

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European science & research news

French Government expected to introduce reforms to France's research system

The new French Government under President Sarkozy is expected to introduce wide-ranging reforms to France's higher education and research system. Both Nicholas Sarkozy as well as his opponent Segolène Royal had turned research into an important campaign theme and promised increases in science and higher education budgets. Sarkozy indicated that he would introduce a law within six months which would offer universities, currently run by the state, more autonomy, e.g. to manage their own budgets and set recruitment and research policy. He has also suggested turning major research institutions such as the Centre National de la Recherche (CNRS) into U.S style granting agencies that would reward proposals rather than employ scientists.

For a summary of Nicholas Sarkozy's positions on research (in French) see: <http://recherche-en-danger.apinc.org/spip.php?article1563>

European Commission announces first two Joint Technology Initiatives

On 15 May 2007 the European Commission adopted proposals for the development and funding of the first ever Europe-wide public-private R&D partnerships. The Commission presented two Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs) on Embedded Computing Systems (ARTEMIS) and Innovative Medicines (IMI). These JTIs will pool industry, Member States and Commission resources into targeted research programmes driven by a strategic research agenda. The aim of these JTIs is to create a critical mass of European research and innovation in key areas of European industry and research. For more information see below links:

FAQs: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/191&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

ARTEMIS: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3413

IMI: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/190&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

European Commission presents its vision for the future of the European Research Area

On 4 April 2007 the European Commission presented its ideas for a European Research Area (ERA) aimed at tapping Europe's knowledge potential by providing the freedom for people, infrastructures, organisations, funding, knowledge circulation and global co-operation to operate effectively. The Green Paper "The European Research Area: New Perspectives" is set out along six main themes: adequate flow of competent researchers; world class research infrastructures; excellent research organisations; effective knowledge sharing; well-coordinated research programmes & priorities; and opening the ERA to the world. An on-line public consultation on the Green Paper is open until August 2007 and will be used to design concrete actions for the development of the ERA. Research Ministers of the EU and EFTA welcomed the Green Paper and agreed that a special focus should be given to modern basic research, greater involvement of industry and the working conditions for researchers.

For more information on ERA and the public consultation see: http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/index_en.html

German Presidency proposes development of intellectual property charter in research cooperation

The German European Union (EU) Presidency tabled an initiative for establishing a European Charter for the management of intellectual property by public research institutions and universities. The IP-Charter would be designed as a voluntary code of conduct for collaboration between research institutions and industry. The initiative was presented to the EU-27 competitiveness ministers at their informal meeting on 26-27 April 2007.

Source: <http://www.euractiv.com> and Bulletin Quotidien Europe No. 9419, 4 May 2007

Impressive demand for first European Research Council grants

The newly-established European Research Council (ERC) has received 9167 proposals by early-career researchers for the first call of proposals under the ERC Starting Independent Investigators Grants which closed on 25 April. ERC Grants are open to researchers who are based in Europe, regardless of their nationality. See: <http://erc.europa.eu>

EU policy developments affecting science & research

European Council agrees on gradual approach towards the European Institute of Technology

EU research ministers have backed a German Presidency initiative on gradual progress towards the establishment of a European Institute of Technology (EIT) and urged the European Commission to quickly submit a convincing and concrete funding proposal. The EU-27 ministers agreed at their informal meeting on 26-27 April that the future EIT should be composed of networks of universities, research institutions and companies. These networks are, in the long run, expected to develop into partnerships. It was decided to establish only two Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs): on climate change and on energy efficiency. EU funding of EUR 308 million is planned for

the first phase of the EIT, while the private sector is expected to contribute about the same amount. The Commission's initial plans, which foresaw EUR 2.4 billion between 2008 and 2013 for the establishment of six KICs, have thus been seriously scaled down. The EIT will not award its own post-graduate masters or doctors degrees as initially planned, but would only allow an EIT label to be added to the degrees delivered by participating universities. The decision follows a lengthy debate between the Commission, EU Member States and the higher education/research community in Europe. Source: <http://www.euractiv.com> and Bulletin Quotidien Europe No. 9418, 3 May 2007

European Commission tables alternative plan to save Galileo project

On 16 May 2007 the European Commission put forward a proposal whereby EUR 2.4 billion of additional public funding would be used to finance the construction of the infrastructure of the Galileo navigation system. The proposal set out in a Commission Communication identifies a way out of the current impasse over the European alternative to the US Global Positioning System (GPS). On 10 May a deadline had run out for Galileo consortium members to agree on sharing the financial risks of the ailing project.

The Communication can be accessed on: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/energy_transport/galileo/doc/com_galileo_en_final_16may2007.pdf

European Commission presents ideas on improving knowledge transfer between research and industry

On 4 April 2007 the European Commission presented its views on improving knowledge transfer between businesses and research organisations. The Commission also proposed voluntary guidelines to help universities and other research institutions improve their links with industry across Europe. The Commission Communication is a starting point for discussions on a common European framework for knowledge transfer.

The Communication is available on http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/com2007182_en.pdf

Developments in thematic areas of potential relevance for Australia

European Commission presents revised strategy on life sciences and biotechnology

On 11 April 2007 the European Commission presented the outcomes of a mid-term review of the Strategy on Life Sciences and Biotechnology 2002-2010 which proposes a refocus of actions to promote a competitive and sustainable European knowledge-based Bio-Economy. This includes promotion of research and market development, innovation programmes, societal debates, sustainable development of agriculture and better implementation of legislation. The idea behind this strategy shift is to use biotechnology as a means to promote growth, jobs and competitiveness in the EU. Evidence for the wide impact of biotechnologies on Europe's industries is contained in the recent study "Bio4EU" by the Commission's Joint Research Centre.

The Communication is available on: http://ec.europa.eu/biotechnology/docs/com_2007_175_en.pdf

The JRC's study "Bio4EU" is available on: <http://bio4eu.jrc.es/documents.html>

EU to take part in global database of all life on earth

As announced at an international meeting in Washington on 9 May, the EU will contribute to a global effort to create a Global Species Information System. The EU contribution to the Global Species Information System – SpeciesBase - will use European funds to bring together data create a common information system. It will share this core data with other regional initiatives, such as the Encyclopaedia of Life in the US, and the Atlas of Living Australia. The global project includes scientists from the US, Australia, Brazil, India, South Africa and the EU. It is part of the follow-up to the G-8 Ministerial meeting on Biodiversity, held in Potsdam, Germany, in March 2007.

The text of the communiqué is available on: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/iscp/index.cfm>

EU reports on trends and developments in eco-innovation

On 3 May 2007 the European Commission published a report on trends and developments of eco-innovation in the EU. It confirms the strong growth of eco-industries, but emphasises the need for the take-up of clean and environmentally-friendly innovation on a massive scale. Based on the EU Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP), the report proposes to focus on a number of priorities and actions that will raise demand for environmental technologies and eco-innovation. See: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/etap/index_en.htm

Highlights on upcoming science and research events

European Research and Innovation Exhibition, Paris, 7-9 June 2007

The third edition of the European Research and Innovation Exhibition will be held in Paris, France from 7-9 June. The event will include over 60 high-level conferences on a range of topics: See: <http://www.salon-de-la-recherche.com>

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