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Innovation Union Flagship

The Commission has published its Innovation Union (IU) Flagship. The IU document is one of seven 'flagships' announced in the Europe 2020 strategy. Europe 2020 provides the overarching vision for the EU over the next ten years. Europe 2020 sets ambitious headline targets, including a target of investing 3% of GDP in R&D. The IU places a new emphasis on ensuring that innovative ideas are realised in products and services that create growth and jobs. Many ambitious actions are outlined including the improvement of financing, better use of the European Structural Funds to support research infrastructure, public procurement to support innovation, the completion of the European Research Area (by 2014) and the

creation of Innovation Partnerships. Innovation Partnerships are 'the big idea' in this document. The partnerships will be 'challenge driven' focusing on the 'societal challenges', such as climate change. An indicative list is given in the document. The partnerships should act across the research and innovation chain, from basic research to demonstration projects, through to the creation of the right conditions for commercialising the product or service. Each challenge should be broken down into smaller work packages. The idea will be piloted in 2011, in an Innovation Partnership on 'Active and Healthy Ageing'. Germany and France have already raised doubts about operability.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/research>
Europe 2020 - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ>

Latest European Research Area Meeting – FP8 Brainstorm

At its second meeting ERAC (the European Research Area Committee of EU Member States), which recently replaced CREST, discussed a number of research questions. ERAC received an update on the mid-term evaluation of FP7, discussed the Innovation Flagship, especially Innovation Partnerships, expressed concern on some of the proposed Innovation indicators (see item on Innovation Indicator below) particularly Option B, which focuses on fast growing enterprises, 'as it would not sufficiently cover research intensity' and the future of FP8.

The Commission outlined the timetable for FP8 preparation. Member States are asked to submit their views by the end of October. A Communication on FP8 is expected in February 2011, the Commission are already preparing an ex-ante evaluation (an estimate of the benefits that FP8 will bring). An official stakeholder consultation will be launched in March 2011, closing in June. The Financial Perspectives are expected mid-2011 with a full proposal for FP8 being launched in December 2011.

The summary report the ERAC meeting outlines some of the questions ERAC will be raising in its 'brainstorming on FP8'. Questions include: How to integrate JPIs?; How to strengthen European universities?; How to deal with open innovation and open access?; How to improve infrastructure use?; How to create the right balance between innovation and research driven research, especially in relation to thematic priorities?; and How to make better links with European Structural Funds?.

Source: <http://www.era.gv.at/space>

EU Budget Review and Research

The Commission have kicked off the debate on the future of the EU Budget, the EU budget has worked on a seven year period. One of the proposals is to change this to a five year period to have consistency with the European Parliament's mandate and the Commissioners term of office. Another suggestion is that it should be set for a ten year period, but with a very significant mid-term evaluation after five year. This initial paper considers how the EU will organise its funding instruments to address Europe's challenges. While the detail and figures will be negotiated throughout 2011/12, this initial paper confirms the continuation of the EU's major funding programmes. Research and innovation is heralded as the 'most sustainable engines of economic and productivity growth'. The Commission argue that even in difficult times the EU should continue to invest in R&D but that a stronger impact on growth and job creation needs to occur, though the paper estimates that the current Framework Programme has brought 900,000 jobs and added 1% to the EU's GDP. This is a good return considering that the contribution of EU GDP to the budget is 1.27% and that by 2013 R&I will only account for 7% of the Union's budget.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/budget>

Innovation Indicator

The Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, set up a High Level Panel (HLP) chaired by Andreu Mas-Colell to advise the Commission on an Innovation Headline Indicator. The HLP have laid out two options, one could be operational immediately and is a combination of three existing indicators, namely : patent applications weighed by GDP, percentage employment in knowledge based activities and the contribution of innovative-related trade to the balance of trade in goods, The other option, focuses on fast growing firms and the panel estimate that it would take two years to establish a precise formulation for this composite indicator. The HLP argue that the second option would be a good complement to the 3% of R&D intensity indicator.

Source: <http://www.era.gv.at/>

Youth on the Move Flagship

Youth on the Move is one of the Commission's seven flagships. The main objective is to enhance the performance of education systems and to reinforce the international attractiveness of Europe's higher education. The headline target for this area is to reduce the share of early school leavers to 10% (from 15%) and to increase the percentage of the population with a tertiary level qualification from 31% to 40%. The proposals are currently under consultation (see September edition BNU).

Youth on the Move has four strands. The first strand focuses on ensuring that Europe can meet labour market needs, by making sure that people have the right competencies and that there are 'quality learning' outcomes i.e. a high standard of qualification. The second strand focuses on reform of tertiary education, the third strand on mobility of young people and finally, the fourth strand aims at ensuring that the young move from education into work.

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/education/yom/com_en.pdf

New Joint Programming Initiative and Framework Conditions Guide

The Belgian Presidency organised a conference on Joint Programming Initiatives, following the launch in mid-October of the three joint programming initiatives (JPI): 'Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change'; 'Cultural Heritage and Global Change' and 'A healthy diet for a healthy life' problems. The working of JPIs was discussed in detail at the conference; all those involved in JPIs urged the Commission not to set rigid 'framework conditions' arguing that the circumstances of each JPI was very different. Framework conditions cover issues such as: peer review procedures, foresight activities, evaluation of JPIs, managing a single pot, optimising dissemination, managing IPR.

Source: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/>

Scientific edata sharing – High Level Expert Group

The High Level Group on Scientific Data has completed its final report on how Europe can gain from the rising tide of scientific data. The Group argues that with a proper scientific e-infrastructure, researchers in different domains can collaborate on the same data set, finding new insights. The hope is that researchers will be able to use, re-use and combine data increasing productivity and allowing them to find solutions to 'Grand Challenges'. However, the group do not underestimate the barriers to their vision. The report has a short list of six actions that are needed. Actions include the need to develop an international framework for a collaborative data infrastructure and to find new ways to measure data value and reward those who contribute data.

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/

Ajka Alumina Plant red sludge spill

The University of Pannonia in Hungary has been helping to coordinate assessment and provide professional advice following the rupture of the red sludge reservoir at the Ajka Alumina Plant in the Kolonter-Devescer region on Hungary. It has established an emergency team of university scientists to provide assistance to the County Protection Committee. The team will provide professional and scientific expertise and personnel to the managing authorities in order to make assessments of the situation and the damages and to work out a remedy action plan.

The European Aluminium Association has posted a question and answer web page on bauxite residue – the ‘red mud’.

Sources: <http://englishweb.uni-pannon.hu/> http://www.eaa.net/en/_related/qa

Commission Environmental Liability Directive

Adopted in 2004, the European Environmental Liability Directive was transposed into EU Member State law by July 2010. The Directive’s main objective is to prevent and remedy environmental damage to protected species and habitats, damage to water and damage to soil. Operators also have to take preventive action if there is an imminent threat. Under the Directive the operator is strictly liable for the damage caused and should pay the cost of remediation. The Commission were originally planning to review the Directive in 2014, however following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the red mud spill at Ajka, the Commission intend to re-examine the implementation and effectiveness of the Directive in the near future. The Commission have already published a report on the Directive’s effectiveness and ability to provide financial security to carry out remediation, see link below.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/liability/pdf>

Review of the Seveso II Directive

The Seveso II Directive introduced new requirements relating to safety management systems, emergency planning and land-use planning, as well as a reinforcement of the provisions on inspections to be carried out by Member States. The Directive has been revised and updated following more recent incidents. The Directive, as demonstrated by its name – a serious incident at a chemical plant in Seveso, Italy – introduction and amendments have been motivated by incidents of this sort. The Directive has recently gone through studies and revisions will be proposed next year. The impact of this most recent event is yet to be assessed.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/seveso/review.htm>

CEFIC – Facts and figures 2010

CEFIC has published the latest data on the position of the European chemical industry, excluding pharmaceuticals, except where indicated. The document looks at the industry’s trade position and concludes that whilst the EU chemical industry is still in a strong position, accounting for €449 billion, of the market, its position in Asia is weaker, largely due to China’s rise in sales. The report also looks at employment, sustainable development and investment in R&D

Source: <http://www.cefic.be/Files/Publications/Facts-and-Figures>

Water – Commission Water Policy Review 2012

The European Commission is becoming increasingly concerned by water scarcity in Europe. The Commission has identified seven policy options that need to be addressed, including pricing, fostering water efficient technologies and promoting a water saving culture. The Commission intends to prepare a document on safeguarding Europe's water by 2012. The unit dealing with these questions have been forwarded a copy of EuCheMS 2008 publication, 'Sustainable Water, the role of the Chemical Sciences'.

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/>

Offshore Oil Drilling

The European Commission has published a Communication which envisages comprehensive EU legislation on oil platforms aimed at ensuring the highest safety standards in the world, the proposal could be tabled as early as the beginning of 2011. In the Communication on the safety of oil and gas activities the Commission contemplates new EU standards, including criteria for granting drilling permits, controls of the rigs and safety control mechanisms.

Günther Oettinger, Commissioner for Energy, said: "Safety is non negotiable. We have to make sure that a disaster similar to the one in the Gulf of Mexico will never happen in European waters... we propose that best practices already existing in Europe will become the standard throughout the European Union."

Source: <http://europa.eu/rapid/press5>

Joint Research Councils seek Chemists

An open competition for Research Administrators mainly for the Joint Research Centre (JRC), has been launched. The mission of the JRC is to provide independent scientific and technical support for the conception, development, implementation and monitoring of EU policies. As a service of the European Commission, the JRC functions as a reference centre of science and technology for the Union. The purpose of these competitions is to draw up reserve lists to fill vacant posts mainly in different Institutes. The deadline is 4 November.

JRC Energy is looking for Material, Physical, Chemical Scientists and Structural Engineers

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ2>

JRC Environmental Sciences is seeking those with experience in environmental risk assessment and environmental chemists.

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/2>

JRC Institute for Reference Materials and Measurements (IRMM) is seeking material scientists with experience in ceramics.

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/3>

JRC for IRMM and the Health and Consumer Protections institutes is seeking analytical chemists, chemists with a background in organometallic chemistry, radiation, inorganic chemistry, coordination chemistry and/or surface and interface chemistry, biochemists with a background in DNA, RNA or protein analysis and toxicologists

Source: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/4>

CHEMICALS UPDATE

Chlorine tree

Eurochlor, the voice of the chlor-alkali industry, have launched a graphical illustration of chlorine as a chemical tree. The tree provides examples of applications and names of molecules that come from what they describe as the 'major building block in today's chemistry'. The tree shows how chlorine and chlorinated substances are used not only to make things but also as an important component in hundreds of production processes.

Source: <http://www.eurochlor.org/news/>

FUNDING UPDATE

ERC announce 'Starting Grant' awardees

The ERC (European Research Council) has recently announced the results of the third call for 'starting grants'. The ERC awarded €580 million to 427 early career top researchers. The ERC also used the opportunity to congratulate Konstantin Novoselov for his Nobel prize, Novoselov is the recipient of an ERC Starting Grant. This year also saw a small increase in the number of women grantees from 23% to 26.5%. The Director also highlighted that of 18 incoming scientists, 12 are Europeans returning from the US. The success rate was around 15% of applications. PE4 (Physical and Analytical Chemical Sciences) and PE5 (Materials and Synthesis) were again some of the most heavily subscribed panels in this year's round.

Source: <http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/ERC>

FP7 'People': Calls for proposals

On 20 October 2010 the Official Journal of the EU published three new calls for proposals for Marie Curie actions under the 'People' theme of the Seventh Framework Programme.

Career Integration Grants ((CIG) €40M:
Call Reference FP7-PEOPLE-2011-CIG
Call opens : 20th October 2010
Call deadline : 8th March 2011 + 16th September 2011

Co-funding of Regional, National and International Programmes (COFUND) €90M:
Call Reference FP7-PEOPLE-2011-COFUND
Call opens : 20th October 2010
Call deadline : 17th February 2011

International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES) €30M:
Call Reference FP7-PEOPLE-2011-IRSES
Call opens : 20th October 2010
Call deadline : 17th March 2011

Source: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm>

TEMPUS IV: Call for Proposals

The Commission have launched a call for proposals under Tempus IV. Tempus IV is aimed at the reform of higher education through international university cooperation. The cooperation is between EU and partner countries named : the Western Balkans, Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. The call supports two types of actions, joint projects and structural measures.

Joint projects are more 'bottom-up' aiming at knowledge transfer between universities, organisation and institutions. Structural measures are aimed at national level.

Projects should involve three EU Member States, and can be up to 90% EU funded. The projects can last between 12 and 36 months. The Minimum grant is €500,000 and the maximum is €1.5M. The deadline for calls is 15th February.

Source: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/>

CONSULTATIONS

Nanomaterial Definition

DG Environment have launched a consultation on a proposal for a definition of the term "nanomaterial" that the European Commission will then use as an overarching, broadly applicable reference term for any European Union communication or legislation addressing nanomaterials. Contributions are particularly welcome from market participants, consumer and non-governmental organisations, academia, national governments and national competent authorities.

In the Commission's draft definition

Nanomaterial: means a material that meets at least one of the following criteria:

- consists of particles, with one or more external dimensions in the size range 1 nm - 100 nm for more than 1 % of their number size distribution;
- has internal or surface structures in one or more dimensions in the size range 1 nm - 100 nm;
- has a specific surface area by volume greater than 60 m²/cm³, excluding materials consisting of particles with a size lower than 1 nm.

Deadline: 19th November 2010

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/1>

ECHA (European Chemicals Agency) Consultations

Mercury in measuring devices

At the request of the European Commission, ECHA reviewed the availability of reliable safer alternatives to mercury containing measuring devices. As a result, ECHA has now prepared a restriction report proposing to restrict mercury in several measuring devices that are used in industrial and professional settings (thermometers, sphygmomanometers, barometers, manometers, metering devices for the determination of softening point, pycnometers and strain gauges). Mercury in measuring devices intended for the general public is already restricted. Deadline 24th December 2010

Phenyl mercury substances

Norway has proposed restricting five phenylmercury substances. These substances are mainly used as catalysts in the production of polyurethane coatings, adhesives, sealants and elastomers. Norway argues that the life-cycle of the phenylmercury compounds leads to the release of mercury to the environment.

In the restriction report Norway suggests that these substances should not be manufactured, placed on the market or used as a substance or in mixtures in concentrations above 0.01 % weight by weight. Deadline 24th December 2010

Source: <http://www.echa.europa.eu/news/pr/201009/>

Harmonising Classification and Labelling

The new EU Regulation on Classification, Labelling and Packaging of substances and mixtures, the CLP Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 entered into force on 20 January 2009. Following this Regulation, individual EU Member States (competent authorities) and industry may propose harmonisation of the classification and labelling of substances. The CLP Regulation will gradually replace the Dangerous Substances Directive (67/548/EEC) and Dangerous Preparations Directive (1999/45/EC). Both Directives will be repealed by 1 June 2015. Proposed changes will be published by ECHA on its website for comments by parties concerned. The latest list includes: Fenamiphos; Octadecylamine and a number of other amines; Aluminium-magnesium-zinc-carbonate-hydroxide (hydrate) and coal tar for consideration.

Deadline: 15th November

Source: <http://www.echa.europa.eu/5>

Animal testing vertebrates new substances

ECHA is currently requesting "scientifically valid information" from third parties on certain substances, see the link below. To ensure that the best use has been made of existing information, particularly information on existing vertebrate tests, ECHA publishes all test proposals involving vertebrate animals. After a testing proposal has been published, third parties have 45 days to submit "scientifically valid information and studies that address the relevant substance and hazard endpoint, relating to the testing proposal.

ECHA are currently requesting information on : Reaction mass of (rel-2R,4R)-tetrahydro-4-methyl-2-(2-methylpropyl)-2H-pyran-4-ol and (rel-2R,4S)-tetrahydro-4-methyl-2-(2-methylpropyl)-2H-pyran-4-ol **Deadline 6th December 2010**

Source: <http://www.echa.europa.eu/consultations/6>

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

5th November - Key Emerging Technology, Stakeholder Open Day on Biotechnology

8th November – Belgian Presidency Event - European Partnership for Career & Mobility of Researchers, Conference

10th November - Key Emerging Technology, Stakeholder Open Day on Photonics

15th November –Key Emerging Technology, Stakeholder Open Day on Advanced Manufacturing Systems

19th November – Deadline nanomaterial definition consultation

end November - Commission responds to expert panel report on Mid-Term Evaluation of FP7



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