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## Brussels News Update

### January 2009

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#### **'Europe without barriers' is Czech Presidency motto**

The Czech Republic has taken over the Presidency of the Council of the EU until the end of June 2009 making the topic 'Europe without barriers' its symbolic motto. The country will have to deal with complex European and domestic problems, including the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by the Czech Parliament but wishes to focus on removing obstacles to the development of an economically strong and cohesive EU without internal barriers.

**Links:**      <http://euractiv.com/1>    <http://eu2009.cz/1>      <http://cordis.europa.eu/1>

### **Economy, Energy, External relations are Czech presidency priorities**

The main priorities of the Czech Presidency will be 'Economy, Energy and the European Union in the World', an agenda described as the three 'Es'. The Presidency wishes to address in particular the issue of the recovery of financial markets, better regulation and the reform of the global financial architecture. The Presidency also plans to implement the European Economic Recovery Plan and the Lisbon Strategy to get the economy back on an even keel. Focusing on energy security the Czechs will seek to ensure that consumers have good connections with energy resources by focusing on energy grids and transmission throughout the EU and developing cooperation with third countries, in particular energy producer and transit countries. In the field of external relations, the Presidency will continue negotiations with Croatia, hold talks with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and open two more chapters in the accession negotiations with Turkey. Further a field, the Czech Presidency will help the Union to develop its Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) and launch negotiations on a new partnership agreement with Russia.

**Links:**        <http://epc.com/1>:        <http://eu2009.cz/2>

### **R&D priorities and Bologna in Czech Presidency**

The further development of the European Research Area (ERA) is a key topic. The Presidency will be promoting research infrastructures on an international level, the opening of the ERA to international cooperation and the mobility of competent researchers, especially from the younger generation. The Presidency will develop a *Key Issues Paper* detailing methods to promote further growth in knowledge and European competitiveness in the long term. The Presidency will also focus on regional aspects concerning the development of large research infrastructures and organise a conference on '*Enhancing the ERA Through Research Infrastructures*'. Another key priority will be the evaluation of the national impact of European research coordination. The Czechs plan to deal with the evaluation methodology of the investments to research and development.

The Presidency will also be evaluating the implementation of the priorities of the Bologna process set for 2007-2009, and prepare the interim report on the overall development for 1999-2009 and the supporting documentation for defining the vision of higher education beyond 2010.

The protection of intellectual property rights and cooperation of companies with universities and research institutions is a priority for the Czech Presidency, which will promote and monitor fast progress in the implementation of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme 2007-2013 (CIP). The Presidency will continue the discussion on a Community legal framework for a European Research Infrastructure (ERI), focusing mainly on the legal status of ERIs.

**Links:**        <http://cordis.europa.eu/1>

### **SBA (Small Business Act) and European SME Week**

The Czech Presidency will focus on the implementation of specific measures arising from the SBA and its reflection in the fulfilment of the Lisbon Strategy objectives. In May 2009, the Presidency will get actively involved in the *First European SME Week* on the topics of the contribution of the SBA to the removal of barriers to business, particularly emphasising the reduction of the administrative burden for entrepreneurs. The conference will include the *European Enterprise Awards Ceremony*.

**Links:**        <http://ec.europa.eu/12>

### European Future Emerging Technologies (FET 09) Conference

The Conference in Prague will explore new synergies between established disciplines such as computer science, neuroscience, biology, chemistry and economics, and emerging disciplines such as nanoscience and quantum computing. It is being organised by the future and emerging technologies research scheme of the European Commission, the Czech Technical University and the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and will take place on 21 - 23 April 2009. Under the title 'Science beyond fiction', the focus will be on creating new visions and actions for future information and communication technologies (ICTs), based on the scientific opportunities which are available today.

**Links:** <http://cordis.europa.eu/2> <http://ec.europa.eu/1>

### Strategy on Water

The Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Water in Jordan in December 2008 adopted the guidelines of a Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean to tackle the challenges and impacts of climate change. This Strategy, which will be submitted to the same ministers during the first semester of 2010 and to the Heads of State and Government at the end of 2010, will make it possible to handle problems exceeding the means of action of any single country or organisation. It will have targets concerning the preservation of water quality and the reduction of pressure on water resources through more efficient use.

The ministers drew the attention of governing bodies of the Union for the Mediterranean to the need to implement the new infrastructural projects in the domain of water as soon as possible, consistent with the Strategy. An initial series of identified projects will be discussed as from January 2009. These projects will be completed during the Fifth World Forum on Water to be held in Istanbul in March 2009 and the first funds will be finalised for the ministerial conference on sustainable development in Monaco before the end of March 2009.

**Links:** <http://www.eu2008.fr/PFUE/01>

### World-class clusters in the European Union

The Council of the EU has reached a consensus on a Communication published in October 2008 by the European Commission calling for more efforts for facilitating the emergence of world-class clusters in the European Union. The Council welcomed the Communication and invited the Commission and Member States to intensify cluster networking as well as cross-fertilisation between sectors, technologies and competences and to continue developing mechanisms for learning and disseminating practices. The Commission and the future European Cluster Policy Group will monitor instruments and programmes and carry out a review of European cluster policies by the end of 2010.

**Links:** <http://europa.eu/13> <http://consilium.europa.eu/2> <http://consilium.europa.eu/3>

### Joint Programming Initiatives to be adopted by 2010

The Council of the EU has reached conclusions concerning joint programming of research in Europe in response to major societal challenges. The Council welcomed the Commission's Communication on Joint Programming Research and asked Member States to collaborate and identify the themes for joint programming chosen following broad public consultation of the different regional, national and European scientific communities and of the private sector where appropriate. The High Level Group for Joint Programming composed of high-level representative of Member States and of the Commission will identify and substantiate the first list of a number of joint programming initiatives in due time so that the Council is able to adopt joint programming initiatives no later than 2010.

**Links:** <http://consilium.europa.eu/4> <http://consilium.europa.eu/3>  
<http://consilium.europa.eu/>

### Official Launch of European Year of Creativity and Innovation (EYCI) 2009

The European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009 was officially launched on Wednesday 7 January with the slogan 'Imagine. Create. Innovate'. The EYCI aims to promote creative and innovative approaches in different sectors of human activity and help equip the EU for the challenges ahead in a globalised world. The EYCI aims to raise awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation as key competences for personal, social and economic development.

The planned activities include a large-scale conference on the contribution of the EU's funding programmes to creativity and innovation, which will be held in Brussels at the beginning of March and a series of six public debates will be held on key topics relating to Creativity and Innovation from February onwards, to provide a platform for reflection and exchange of ideas which can contribute to policy discussion on Creativity and Innovation. They will cover such issues as cultural diversity, public sector, education, knowledge society, sustainable development and the creative arts and industries.

**Links:**        <http://europa.eu/rapid/1>        <http://ec.europa.eu/2>  
                  <http://pr.euractiv.com/01>

### Pesticides legislation approved

The European Parliament has approved new EU pesticides legislation which will increase the number of pesticides available in Member States, while in due course banning the use of certain dangerous chemicals in these products. Measures to ensure the safer use of pesticides in daily life will also be introduced.

The decision must still be formally signed off by member states. The agreement on new market authorisation rules divides the EU into three zones (north, centre, south) inside of which mutual recognition of pesticides will become the rule. However, member states will still be allowed to ban a product on the basis of specific environmental or agricultural circumstances.

Member states will also be obliged to draw up national action plans to reduce the amount of pesticides used by encouraging farming techniques, such as crop rotation, that could act as an alternative to pesticides. The compromise on the controversial pesticides 'package' ends a long battle over what substances should be banned due to their potential risk for human health and the environment.

**Links:**        <http://www.europarl.2.htm>        <http://www.euractiv.com/4>  
                  <http://europarl.europa.eu/1>

### EU Member States approve global rules for labelling of chemicals

EU Member States have agreed to align EU legislation on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures to the United Nations Globally Harmonised System (GHS). This new system will ensure that the same hazards will be described and labelled in the same way all around the world. By using internationally agreed classification criteria and labelling elements, it is expected to facilitate trade and to contribute towards global efforts to protect humans and the environment from hazardous effects of chemicals. The new regulation will complement the REACH regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals.

**Links:**        <http://europa.eu/rapid/2>        <http://ec.europa.eu/3> <http://ec.europa.eu/4>

### Launch of bio-waste management debate

The European Commission recently presented a discussion paper on the management of bio-waste in the European Union. The Green Paper explores options and opportunities in bio-waste management and will contribute to the assessment of the need for legislative action. It addresses in particular the best level for action - EU, national or local - and asks stakeholders for evidence supporting their respective views.

**Links:**        <http://europa.eu/rapid/3>        <http://ec.europa.eu/5>

### Launch of ICOS (Integrated carbon observation system) project

Work has begun on the development of an integrated system to monitor greenhouse gas concentrations in Europe, helping policy makers evaluate the effectiveness of legislation designed to tackle climate change. The ICOS initiative is one of 44 pan-European research infrastructures featured in the European Roadmap for Research Infrastructures, an updated version of which was released at the recent European Conference on Research Infrastructures (ECRI2008) in Versailles, France. The aim of the ICOS project is to set up a comprehensive monitoring system that will provide detailed information on where carbon is emitted in Europe and where the carbon sinks are. The preparatory phase of ICOS is funded by the 'Research infrastructures' budget line of FP7 and will run until 2012.

**Links:**        <http://cordis.europa.eu/3>        <http://icos-infrastructure.eu/>

### Climate change: final adoption of Europe's climate and energy package

The European Parliament has adopted the EU climate change package by a strong majority at its plenary session in Strasbourg, France. MEPs voted on six proposals which together should enable the EU to meet its ambitious goals. The next step will be the technical implementation of the agreements, and further adjustments are also expected to be needed when an international agreement on climate change is reached in Copenhagen in 2009.

**Links:**        <http://europa.eu/rapid/2>        <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/1.htm>  
                  <http://cordis.europa.eu/2>        <http://www.euractiv.com/2>  
                  <http://www.euractiv.com/3>

### New Technology Platform urges support for organic food research

The European Commission was urged to support organic food research and provide support for organic food and farming research at the launch of a new Technology Platform, TP Organics. The stakeholder platform argued that investment in organic farming would help to improve food quality and help to meet environmental and social standards.

**Links:**        <http://euractiv.com/2>    <http://tporganics.eu/1>        <http://tporganics.eu/2>

### Science is highly valued by EU citizens

Science is highly valued and intimately linked to the idea of progress, according to a new qualitative Eurobarometer study, published by the European Commission, on the image of science and the perceptions and attitudes on the European research policy of the EU citizens,. However, science also gives rise to some fears and reservations – mostly of possible misuse by mankind. The study also reveals support for a more coordinated European research policy and the need to pool human and financial resources to do research on issues of common interest such health, environment or energy. These comments come from group discussions in the 27 EU member states during summer 2008.

**Links:**        <http://europa.eu/rapid/4>        <http://ec.europa.eu/6>

### European Parliament focuses on teaching quality in education reform

Life-long learning and promoting new skills such as media and ICT literacy will be key if Europe is to become a world leader in education and training by 2010 according to a report from the European Parliament. In a set of non-binding recommendations, MEPs argue that teachers and the elderly in particular should be trained in new skills needed for the future labour market. The quality of teaching and teachers also features prominently in the Commission's new skills initiative, which is based on the assumption that the labour market will drastically change by 2020

**Links:** <http://www.euractiv.com/3> <http://www.euractiv.com/04>

### Toys, Chemicals and Safety

The new legal framework on the safety of toys sold in EU addresses a wide range of issues to ensure that toys do not present any health hazards or risk of injury. It improves the existing rules for the marketing of toys that are produced in and imported into the EU with a view to reducing toy related accidents and to achieving long-term health benefits. Apart from enhanced safety requirements to prevent choking risks, there are new chemical requirements.

Chemicals that are susceptible to provoke cancer, change genetic information or harm reproduction, so-called CMR (Carcinogenic, Mutagenic or toxic for Reproduction) substances are no longer allowed in accessible parts of toys. For certain substances, like nickel, the tolerable limit values have been reduced and those heavy metals which are particularly toxic, like lead or mercury, may no longer be intentionally used in toys. Allergenic fragrances are either completely forbidden, if they have a strong allergenic potential, or have to be labelled on the toy if they are potentially allergenic for some consumers.

**Links:** <http://europa.eu/rapid/3> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/3.htm>  
<http://www.euractiv.com/5>

### EU-Brazil call on biofuels

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and the Ministry for Science and Technology of Brazil have issued a coordinated call on second-generation biofuels under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Projects suggested under this call for proposals are expected to focus on the development of advanced technologies for the production of second-generation biofuels from Brazilian and European feedstock.

**Links:** <http://cordis.europa.eu/4> <http://cordis.europa.eu/05>

### Call for expert evaluators of FP7

The website to register as an expert for research activities is available on CORDIS. The call for experts is open both for individuals and for organisations.

**Links:** <http://interfaceurope.eu/> <https://cordis.europa.eu/5>

