



# Brussels News Update

## February 2009

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### Proposals for global agreement on climate change

The European Commission has set out its proposals for a comprehensive and ambitious new global agreement to tackle climate change and how it could be financed. The new pact is due to be concluded at the Copenhagen UN climate conference in December. In order to keep temperature increase below 2°C, developing countries will require substantially higher funding from the developed world and multilateral institutions to help them shoulder their contribution to addressing climate change. The Commission's proposals include the creation of an OECD-wide carbon market by 2015 and of innovative international funding sources based on countries' emissions and ability to pay.

The Commission Communication '*Towards a comprehensive climate change agreement in Copenhagen*' is addressed to the Council, Parliament and EU consultative bodies. The European Council is expected to give its response in March.

**Links:**        <http://europa.eu/1>        <http://www.euractiv.com/1>

### European Parliament adopts resolution on climate change

The European Parliament has passed a resolution setting out clear objectives for EU climate-change policy. The report, entitled *2050: The future begins today - recommendations for the EU's future integrated policy on climate change*, underlines the importance of cutting greenhouse gas emissions in developed countries from 1990 levels: by 25%-40% for 2020, and by 80% for 2050. The '2050 Report' proposes detailed measures to be taken in key economic sectors, and calls for climate change issues to be incorporated 'in all spheres and policies'. Importantly, the report acknowledges that long-term education efforts are crucial, particularly in terms of combating scepticism, as citizens need to be fully engaged in the process of tackling climate change. The measures set out by the resolution seemingly touch on all areas of society: energy, biofuels, energy efficiency, mobility, carbon capture and storage, agriculture, forests, soil protection, water management, fisheries, waste and resource management and health, to name but a few.

The '2050 Report' recommends that the EU and Member States 'shall give support to research and development (R&D) in respect of technologies such as hydrogen, electric fuel cells, hybrids or advanced biofuels'. The EU should create 'a European renewable-energy community to promote further research and pilot projects in this field,' the report reads. The report highlights the importance of the EU's Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7) for the development of 'green' energy sources, and calls on the Council and the Commission to support energy priorities in forthcoming research-framework programmes.

The European Commission has welcomed the report as its objectives are fully in line with the Communication '*Towards a comprehensive climate change agreement in Copenhagen*' and with the conclusions of the October 2008 Environment Council.

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

### EU to urge chemicals sector to improve R&D

Europe's €500bn (\$629bn) chemicals sector needs to increase the quality of its research work and effectiveness of innovation and crack down on a growing counterfeit problem, a high-level EU group is expected to recommend on Thursday.

The group – which includes EU ministers and European Commission officials as well as industry representatives – was established two years ago amid concerns that Europe's competitive position is being challenged increasingly by countries like China and India.

**Links:**        <http://www.ft.com/.html> (free registration with ft.com may be required)

### Parliament backs plans for bold EU energy strategy

The European Parliament endorsed the EU's Second Strategic Energy Review proposed by the European Commission in November 2008. The Commission document seeks to address security of energy supply and set out policy priorities in the field of energy for the next Commission. The European Parliament's report said the bloc should set ambitious climate goals for 2050, improve energy efficiency by 35%, and increase the share of renewables in the EU's energy mix to 60%. While energy efficiency was deemed to be the biggest contributor to safeguarding the Union's energy needs, the Parliament stated that nuclear should play an

important part in the future energy mix, rejecting by a large majority an amendment that would have obliged member states to devise a phase-out plan.

The EU's future energy policy will be discussed by EU leaders at the 19-20 March European Council.

**Links:** <http://europarl.europa.eu/2>

### Commission adopts Lisbon Strategy recommendations

The Commission has adopted "country chapters" and recommendations under the Lisbon Growth and Jobs Strategy. The country chapters analyse progress in each Member State in implementing the Growth and Jobs Strategy, taking account of the crisis. They include proposals for formal recommendations for endorsement by the Spring European Council. The Commission has also adopted reports on the overall implementation of the Lisbon Strategy in the macro and micro-economic and employment fields.

The country chapters are accompanied by reports on the overall implementation of the strategy, which reflect the impact of the financial crisis on the real economy. Taken together with the measures already put forward in the Recovery Plan and with the report on the Community Lisbon programme adopted on 16 December, the country chapters and the accompanying reports constitute the full Lisbon Strategy Annual Progress Report.

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

### EU on right track, but R&D investment stagnating

Two reports, *European Innovation Scoreboard 2008* and *Science, Technology and Competitiveness key figures report 2008/2009* (ST&C report), published recently, prove that the EU must change its industrial structure, gear up on innovation and ensure more and better use of R&D. Neither report reflects the impact of the current economic crisis. However, both show clearly that while European universities are producing more research graduates, many of them might be lost to competing regions due to lagging job opportunities. The reports indicate substantial improvements in certain areas but show that R&D (research and development) intensity in the EU27 is stagnating. Public and private investment in R&D and innovation are considered to be essential for helping economies to stabilise and get out of crisis periods. Yet the intensity of research investment (the amount invested in R&D compared to GDP) has not increased in recent years, and remains at around 1.84%.

The ST&C report provides for the first time an overview of progress from 2000 to 2006 in both EU R&D investment and in implementing the European Research Area (ERA). It shows that Europe's pool of researchers is growing and the EU is becoming more attractive for foreign researchers and for private R&D investments from the US. However, the stagnation of the EU-27's R&D intensity (R&D expenditure as % of GDP) at 1.84% is denting the EU's ambition to become a globally competitive knowledge-based society. Despite increased investment in research by many Member States and an improved efficiency of their research systems, the EU is still far from reaching its Lisbon target of investing 3% of GDP in R&D. A continued low level of business R&D investment, linked to an EU industrial structure with a smaller high tech sector than in the US, hampers the EU's performance.

The 2008 Innovation Scoreboard published in parallel includes data from 2007 and innovation indicators and trend analyses for the EU27 Member States as well as for Croatia, Turkey, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. The scoreboard included an analysis of creativity and design indicators, which showed that countries with a good creative climate tend to have higher levels of R&D and design activities, and also strong overall innovation performance. An increasing

number of researchers are being attracted to Europe from third countries, and Europe is producing more research graduates than ever; however, the share of researchers in the labour force is still lower than in the US or Japan. European researchers are publishing in professional journals more than any other region, but US researchers still lead in high-impact publications. The competitiveness report also indicates much room for improvement in the number of European patents filed.

**Links:**            <http://europa.eu/4>    <http://cordis.europa.eu/2>    <http://www.euractiv.com/5>

### Independent report prompts new, more strategic focus in JRC

A new, independent review of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) describes the organisation as 'an indispensable source of knowledge and expertise in support of the political agenda of the EU' that also plays an instrumental role in 'responding to crisis situations threatening the security of European citizens'. The evaluation of the JRC's work during the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) was carried out by 14 independent experts led by Sir David King. '[The JRC] successfully achieved the main goals set for its work under the Sixth Framework Programme through a clear customer orientation, robust policy support and underpinning research,' the report reads. Nevertheless, the panel highlights several issues where there is room for improvement and work has already begun in the JRC to address these.

This new report reflects in large part the efforts made within the JRC to respond to the recommendations set out in the 2003 evaluation. Among other things, that earlier report spurred on improvements in the organisation's ICT (information and communications technologies) systems, smarter management procedures, and investments in infrastructure. One outstanding recommendation from the earlier report concerns recruitment. Due to the Commission's system to recruit officials a large number of good scientists fail the general admission test. As a consequence, the JRC struggles to recruit specialised, top-level researchers. The JRC has now been granted a compromise solution under which it will test candidates' scientific skills and knowledge in the first round of recruitment and make them sit a more general test at a later stage of the process.

One of the recommendations from the new report concerns a new vision for the JRC. Discussions on the revamped vision have already begun. It is hoped that the strategy will be ready by the end of 2009.

The evaluation also calls on the JRC to 'exercise a proactive policy advice function'.

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

### Investing in research

In line with the goal of creating a European Research Area, the Commission and member states have agreed to increase investment in research and development activities to 3% of GDP by 2010.

Furthermore and according to European Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering speaking at a conference in January on the role of technological development in Europe's economic recovery, the EU may pump additional funds into research as part of its budget for 2013-2021 in a bid to innovate its way out of economic decline. In addition Pöttering said the EU will have to earmark a larger proportion of its funds for innovation if it is going to secure new investment from industry.

**Links:**            <http://www.euractiv.com/6>    <http://www.euractiv.com/7>

### **IRENA (International Renewable Energy Agency) launched**

A new international agency to promote renewable energies across the world was launched with fewer signatories than had been hoped for, after the US and UK dropped out of the list. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) was established to counterbalance the International Energy Agency, which has been criticised for favouring fossil fuels over green energies. IRENA is expected to offer advice to both industrialised and developing countries on reaching higher energy shares from renewable sources and promoting better financing mechanisms and technology transfers to developing nations. The US is expected to join at a later stage, as President Obama's new administration has set out more ambitious goals for the share of renewables in electricity production. Indeed, Obama has pledged to earmark \$100 billion for clean energy and environment policies in the US economic stimulus plan.

A preparatory meeting will be held in June to decide on the agency's location and its first director-general.

**Links:**                    <http://europa.eu/5>      <http://www.euractiv.com/6>

### **Commission to push university-business links**

The European Commission is to publish a communication urging universities to strengthen links with businesses. But some in the education sector have expressed reservations about the level of industry input in designing curricula. In 2007, the European Commission produced a set of voluntary guidelines for universities and research institutions to improve their links with industry across Europe. Last year, the first university-business forum took place in Brussels to help foster dialogue between academics, researchers and enterprises. The second such forum was held this February. The Commission will publish a Communication on 'University-Business Cooperation' in April to establish a set of good practices.

**Links:**                    <http://www.euractiv.com/7>

### **Europe's fusion researchers access supercomputing infrastructure**

Europe's nuclear fusion researchers have been granted access to the network of Europe's most powerful supercomputers, the European Commission has announced. The hope is that access to the immense processing power of DEISA (Distributed European infrastructure for supercomputing applications) will enable scientists to carry out complex simulations of the processes taking place inside a fusion reactor. Researchers across Europe are working on the ITER project, which seeks to demonstrate the scientific and technical feasibility of fusion power as a clean, safe and reliable source of energy. DEISA, funded under the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programmes (FP6 and FP7), brings together Europe's leading national supercomputing centres, linking them via the EU's high-bandwidth academic internet, GÉANT.

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

### **Europe-wide pension reform for researchers**

A European Parliament report by Pia Locatelli MEP proposes a pan-European pension fund for researchers and a system of 'portable grants' in order to boost scientists' career mobility. Member states and the Commission should also review the legal position of PhD students across Europe to assess whether a uniform PhD student status could be introduced under employment legislation, the committee said. To boost mobility and exchange between scientists, the committee urges member states to introduce portable grants, which would allow researchers to conduct research in another member state if facilities are not available in their home universities or institutes.

They also propose a 'research voucher' scheme, which would see research institutions and universities receive funding from another member state for hosting researchers from that country. The report says the profile of scientific research in the general budget should be

raised in order to achieve the target of training 600,000 more researchers, on average, by 2010. Member states must also encourage European scientists working outside the EU to return by increasing their salaries. In addition, MEPs said entering the EU should be made easier for scientists from third countries who wish to work in Europe. A special visa for researchers to facilitate exchanges with non-EU researchers could also be considered, according to the report.

The report will be considered at the Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg in March.

**Links:** <http://euractiv.com/4>

### A template for national biomass action plans

The European Commission's energy and transport directorate announced that the EU is preparing to present a template for national biomass action plans in June 2009. A progress report on the bio-energy action plan should be out soon. The European Commission is also working on sustainability criteria for biomass other than biofuels and bioliquids, which were already covered by the Renewables Directive. The criteria will be published at the end of 2010.

**Links:** <http://euractiv.com/1> <http://europa.eu/rapid/1>

### Tackling world 'water bankruptcy'

Ahead of the Fifth World Forum on Water to be held in Istanbul in March 2009, a report by the World Economic Forum held in Davos warned policy makers that the world is at the "verge of water bankruptcy". Sustained economic growth, human security and political stability over the next two decades depend on how water is managed argued the report, urging governments and businesses to address consistent under-charging, waste and overuse of water. In Brussels, the European Parliament hosted an international meeting entitled 'Peace with Water' in January to discuss the issue and in particular a 'Memorandum for a World Water Protocol', focusing on conflict prevention and the promotion of the right to water for all.

**Links:** <http://european-waternews.com/1> <http://european-waternews.com/2>

### Researchers in Europe conference, April 2009

A conference 'Researchers in Europe without barriers' will be held in Prague, Czech Republic, on 28 and 29 April. The event is organised under the auspices of the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports with the support of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in the framework of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The conference will focus on the research climate and attractiveness of the European Research Area (ERA). It will try to identify ways to create a better environment for researchers in Europe, foster young talent for research and their engagement in ERA, and develop research skills and an entrepreneurial mindset among young researchers. Target participants include: members of the European and international scientific community, research performing organisations, science foundations, representatives of the European Commission and the EU Member States, young researchers and relevant policy makers.

**Links:** <http://eu2009.cz/1>

### Conference on the role of basic research in the structuring of ERA, April 2009

A conference on the role of basic research in the process of structuring the European Research Area (ERA) will be held from 16 to 18 April 2009 in Prague, Czech Republic. It is organised by the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, under the auspices of the Czech Presidency of the European Union. This conference will contribute to the discussion on the 'Vision 2020 for the ERA'. Target participants include European and international research

stakeholders, research organisations, science foundations, European Commission representatives and other policy makers.

**Links:** <http://era2009.cz/>

### Sustainable development: a challenge for European research, May 2009

This conference aims at initiating a structured dialogue on how to reform European research to best respond to sustainable development challenges, many of which are of international scope. It will also investigate ways for improving the science-policy link and the relationship between science and society. It will take place in Brussels between 26-28 May 2009 and is organised in cooperation with the Czech Presidency of the EU.

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

### Calls for proposals

The European Commission's Directorate General for Research has issues new calls for proposals in the following areas: Regional Biotechnology: Establishing a methodology and performance indicators for assessing bioclusters and bioregions relevant to the Knowledge-based Bio-economy (KBBE) and Transnational operation of the EURAXESS Services Network.

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

**Erasmus Mundus programme** The European Commission has issued a call for proposals for Erasmus Mundus joint programmes. It is composed of two sub-actions:

- Erasmus Mundus Master Courses (EMMCs);
- Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates (EMJDs).

Both are intended to support postgraduate programmes of outstanding academic quality, jointly developed by consortia of European and third country universities, and to raise the visibility and attractiveness of the European higher education sector. Such joint programmes must involve mobility between the universities and lead to the award of recognised joint, double or multiple degrees.

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



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