



# Brussels News Update

## March 2009

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### **Cohesion Policy backs "green economy"**

The European Commission has announced that €105 billion will be invested in the "green economy" through the EU Cohesion Policy to boost growth and create new jobs that are unlikely to migrate to emerging economies such as China and India. The funding dedicated to green projects and jobs represents more than 30% of the regional policy budget for 2007-2013 and is almost three times greater than the sum allocated in the 2000-2006 budgetary period. A large part of the envelope (€54 billion) is designed to help Member States to comply with EU environmental

legislation. Improvement of water and waste management alone accounts for €28 billion of the total, whereas €48 billion is targeted at measures aimed at achieving EU climate objectives and creating a low carbon economy. The latter includes €4.8 billion for renewable energies and €4.2 billion for energy efficiency. Research and innovation will also receive a boost, with €3 billion given to SMEs to help develop environmentally-friendly products and processes.

The Parliament will further discuss new measures intended to accelerate the implementation of infrastructure, energy and environment projects.

**Source:** <http://europa.eu/4> **Link:** <http://www.euractiv.com/2>

### Strategy for EU chemicals industry

The High Level Group on the Competitiveness of the European Chemicals industry has met for the last time and adopted its report. The report analyses the key challenges this sector is facing in the medium to long term and makes recommendations on how they can be successfully addressed. The Group has looked into a number of areas, which are strategically relevant for the future of this important industrial sector, such as innovation, energy, climate change and trade. The High Level Group developed a number of recommendations which aim at fostering the competitiveness of the European chemicals industry, while contributing to sustainable development, and identified three key challenges for the European chemicals industry:

- *the energy and feedstock situation* with a high impact on costs
- *climate change*, and, more generally, global environmental challenges
- *strong competition from industry and barriers* in emerging countries.

In its conclusions the Group highlighted three key factors for the continuing success of the chemical industry:

1. more innovation and research, strengthening networks and clusters, and greater private commitment and a favourable policy framework
2. responsible use of natural resources and a level playing field for sourcing energy and feedstocks, in addition to constant efforts to improve efficiency and to provide innovative solutions to contribute to Europe's energy saving targets
3. open world markets with fair competition.

**Sources:** <http://ec.europa.eu> <http://europa.eu/2> <http://ec.europa.eu/3.pdf>

**Link:** <http://www.euractiv.com/1>

### Renewable energy highlighted in the EU energy security agenda

Renewables and nuclear energy are featured in the European Commission's draft energy security roadmap confirmed by the EU energy ministers. The draft endorses six priority infrastructure projects and efficiency measures to secure more reliable supplies for the future. Separately, as part of an economic recovery plan, the Commission proposed to reallocate €5bn of unspent EU funds away from agriculture to support energy and broadband Internet infrastructure projects. Renewable energies, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and nuclear power were highlighted as key to providing a more secure energy future.

The ministers urged the Commission to prepare a Sustainable Energy Financing Initiative in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) to "mobilise large-scale funding from capital markets for investments" in energy efficiency measures and clean energies. The Ministers have also revised the allocation of the €3.75 billion of unspent EU money to electricity and gas interconnections, offshore wind and carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects. The revised proposal shifts money away from coal-based energy production by downgrading the support foreseen for CCS projects from €250 to €200 million.

**Source:** <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/pdf> **Link:** <http://www.euractiv.com/3>

### Commission to launch European Research Council review

A high-level panel comprised of experts from the EU and US is to review the work of the European Research Council (ERC) since its establishment in 2007 and provide advice on its future direction. The panel is expected to meet between February and July.

**Source:** <http://www.euractiv.com/4>

### Research investments key to European economy growth

'Higher, more effective and efficient investments in education, research and innovation are a key factor for the sustainable long-term growth of a competitive European economy and should remain a high priority, also in the context of the current global economic downturn,' reads one of the recommendations adopted by EU research ministers at the Competitiveness Council meeting in March.

In the recommendation, the ministers also highlight the importance of reaching the goal of investing 3% of gross domestic product (GDP) in research and development (R&D), and call on Member States to encourage the private sector to invest more in research. Elsewhere in the recommendations, the ministers call on Member States to encourage universities, research institutes and industry to 'step up their cooperation'.

According to the ministers, the role of frontier research needs to be 'reinforced' whereas the review of the structures and mechanisms of the European Research Council (ERC) should be a priority.

The Ljubljana process is the subject of another recommendation, in which both Member States and Commission are called on to ensure effective ERA governance and implement the five ERA initiatives (covering research infrastructures, joint programming, researchers' careers, international cooperation and knowledge sharing).

Concerning research infrastructures, the ministers call for negotiations on the proposed legal framework for European research infrastructures to be completed 'as soon as possible'. Improving researchers' career prospects is a key pillar of European research policy, and the ministers state that measures are needed to improve training, enhance researchers' working conditions and ensure a balanced circulation of scientific talent. 'In addition, interest in research and innovation needs to be stimulated in society, particularly among the young,' the ministers underline.

Other points adopted by ministers include the need to address the research and innovation needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the importance of improving the coordination of national research programmes. In total, the ministers unanimously adopted over 30

recommendations and key messages on how Europe should respond to the current economic downturn. These will now be sent for endorsement by the next European Council.

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

### Pesticide review programme completed

The European Commission completed the review of existing pesticides which were on the market before 1993. This programme concerned about 1,000 substances, of which about 250 have passed the harmonised EU safety assessment. All reviewed pesticides have undergone a detailed risk evaluation with respect to their effects on humans and on the environment. The majority of substances (67%) have been eliminated because dossiers were either not submitted, or were incomplete or were withdrawn by the industry. About 70 substances have been removed from the market, because their evaluation did not show safe use with respect to human health and the environment.

As from March 2009, a database on active substances will be available on the website of the European Commission and accessible by every citizen.

**Source:** <http://europa.eu/5> **Link:** <http://www.euractiv.com/5>

### Cut industrial emissions further but more flexibly, say MEPs

Pollutant emissions from thousands of industrial installations throughout the EU must be further reduced, but more flexibly, said the European Parliament. MEPs back a Commission proposal to update and strengthen existing rules, but inserted new provisions for introducing EU-wide emission limits, greater flexibility in granting permits, excluding small plants, and better informing the public.

**Sources:** <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/1> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs>

**Link:** <http://www.euractiv.com/6>

### Global mercury pollution deal

After the reversal of the US position on mercury pollution, environmental ministers from over 140 countries agreed to begin negotiating a treaty to control global mercury pollution at a meeting of the UN Governing Council. The treaty aims to reduce the supply of mercury, minimise its use in products and processes and lower atmospheric mercury emissions.

To achieve this, participants in the UN gathering agreed to "enhance the capacity for the environmental storage [of mercury]". The agreement follows the adoption of an EU regulation to ban all exports of mercury from the EU in 2011. A working group will be set up by the second half of 2009 to discuss the negotiating priorities and timetable of the intergovernmental negotiating committee. **Source:** <http://www.euractiv.com/en/7>

### 'Erasmus' for SMEs

The scheme is similar to the long-running Erasmus programme which allows students to spend a year studying abroad. It will help 870 entrepreneurs to spend between one and six months in another EU member state in 2010 to learn from experienced business owners as part of a pilot project designed to encourage young business owners to make more of the internal market. People starting their own businesses will be paired with established SMEs with the help of local chambers of commerce and other intermediary organisations. Funding for expenses varies

according to the cost of living in member states and ranges from €560 in Latvia to €1,100 in Denmark, but entrepreneurs keen to avail themselves of the scheme will be expected to raise additional funds and demonstrate that they have a viable business plan. It is said that an additional €5 million will be made available if the pilot project is deemed a success.

**Source:** <http://www.euractiv.com/8>

### Food safety and nanotech risks

Following a request from the European Commission, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has provided a scientific opinion on potential risks arising from nanoscience and nanotechnologies on food and feed safety. This opinion addresses engineered nanomaterials (ENMs) and concludes that formulation at the nanosize may change the physico-chemical characteristics of materials as compared to the dissolved and micro/macroscale forms of the same substance. Their small size, high surface-to-mass ratio and surface reactivity are important properties, both for new applications and in terms of the associated potential health and environmental risks.

Current uncertainties for risk assessment of ENMs and their possible applications in the food and feed area arise due to presently limited information in several aspects. Specific uncertainties apply to the difficulty to characterize, detect and measure ENMs in food/feed and biological matrices and the limited information available in relation to aspects of toxicokinetics and toxicology. There is limited knowledge of current usage levels and (likely) exposure from possible applications and products in the food and feed area.

Current toxicity-testing approaches used for conventional materials and the risk assessment paradigm (hazard identification, hazard characterization, exposure assessment and risk characterization) are a suitable starting point for risk assessment of ENMs. However the specific properties of the ENMs in addition to those common to the equivalent non-nanoforms must be taken into account. The available data on oral exposure to specific ENMs and any consequent toxicity are extremely limited. Toxicity-testing methods may need methodological modifications.

The committee recommends the risk assessment of ENMs to be performed on a case-by-case basis and emphasises that the risk assessment processes are still under development with respect to characterisation and analysis of ENMs in food and feed, optimisation of toxicity testing methods for ENMs and interpretation of the resulting data. Under these circumstances, any individual risk assessment is likely to be subject to a high degree of uncertainty. This situation will remain so until more data and experience with testing of ENMs become available.

The Scientific Committee makes a series of recommendations; in particular, actions should be taken to develop methods to detect and measure ENMs in food/feed and biological tissues, to survey the use of ENMs in the food/feed area, to assess the exposure in consumers and livestock, and to generate information on the toxicity of different ENMs.

**Source:** <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/1>      **Link:** <http://www.euractiv.com/9>

### Climate decision postponed

During the spring summit European leaders have decided to postpone until June a decision on the EU's position for global climate talks.

**Source:** <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/2.pdf>      **Link:** <http://www.euractiv.com/11>

### Water, Energy and Climate Interlinked

During the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, business leaders called for water, energy and climate change to be linked in global negotiations, such as the international climate talks due to culminate in Copenhagen in December. The forum is expected to produce a ministerial statement calling for proactive policies on water issues. The paper lists important policy recommendations from business to climate negotiators and policy-makers and it includes 25 case studies showing how business is already linking water, energy and climate across their operations.

**Sources:** <http://www.wbcsd.org/1> <http://www.wbcsd.org/2.pdf>

### BrusselsAgenda.eu

BrusselsAgenda is an interactive portal designed to flag EU Affairs events of all kinds and conceived as an open platform where everyone can sign-up, upload and publish for free on line, and give visibility to their EU Affairs event. It offers a valuable showcase for conferences and workshops in all research application fields such as RTD, Energy, Environment, Transport and Information Society with all important events dedicated to R&D published on the website.

**Sources:** <http://cordis.europa.eu/2> <http://www.brusselsagenda.eu>

### Pan-European network of microbiological resources

A new EU-funded initiative is set to create a pan-European network of centres specialising in the collection, analysis and preservation of samples of microbiological material such as bacteria, viruses and microscopic fungi. EMBARC ('European consortium of microbial resource centres'), is financed to the tune of €4.2 million by the Infrastructures Theme of the EU's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) aiming to harmonise the methods used by these organisations to conserve and identify samples.

The consortium is particularly keen to put in place a bank of DNA material, in line with growing demands for such materials from the scientific community. Another key objective of the project is to investigate different financing models including private funds in order to guarantee the long-term future of the network. The EMBARC partners will launch calls for proposals to make their resources, equipment and expertise available to the wider research community. Services to be provided by the project partners include education, the identification of species and the authentication of material. The partners will also offer high-throughput screening, which will allow the comparison of the properties of large numbers of samples. The EMBARC partners hope to lay the foundations for a future Global Biological Resource Centre Network, GBRCN.

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

### CORDIS launches Cofunded Calls page

CORDIS, the Community Research and Development Information Service, has extended its calls service and now offers a webpage specially dedicated to cofunded calls. The 'COFUND' scheme provides additional funding to existing or new regional and national fellowship programmes for research training and career development. In addition, it is intended to support and strengthen existing and new international programmes

**Source:** <http://cordis.europa.eu/5>

### People calls for proposals launched

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Research has published three calls for proposals under the 'People' programme of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Intended to provide support for training and career development of researchers, the calls include: Intra-European Fellowships (IEF) targeting experienced researchers seeking to enhance their individual competence and acquire new skills at an interdisciplinary level; International Outgoing Fellowships (IOF) aiming to reinforce the international dimension of European researchers by giving them the opportunity to work in a high-level research organisation in a third country; International Incoming Fellowships (IIF) targeting top-class researchers active in third countries, who would like to work on research projects and share their knowledge with colleagues in Europe. **Source:** <http://cordis.europa.eu/6>

### Next COST Open Call

European COoperation in Science and Technology (COST) invites proposals for Actions contributing to the scientific, technological, economic, cultural or societal development of Europe. Proposals playing a precursor role for other European programmes and/or initiated by early-stage researchers are especially welcome. Proposers are invited to locate their proposal in one of the nine scientific Domains. Interdisciplinary proposals not fitting readily into a single Domain are also welcome under the form of Trans-Domain Proposals (TDPs).

**Source:** <http://cordis.europa.eu/7>

### Linking Black Sea Researchers with GÉANT

In March the European Commission launched the Black Sea Interconnection (BSI) project, a research and education network linking countries in the South Caucasus with the high-bandwidth, pan-European GÉANT network. The two-year project connects regional research networks in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia and is funded with €1.4 million through the EU's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7).

**Source:** <http://cordis.europa.eu/8>

### Conference on innovation and the economy

A conference entitled 'The innovation economy - getting new ideas, new partners and new growth for the global economy' will take place in Brussels, Belgium, in June. The conference is dedicated to looking at how to go about creating the right global climate to deliver innovation. The following topics will be discussed: high-growth entrepreneurship and getting ideas from lab to market; university research - competition vs. collaboration; international research and development (R&D) collaboration; the next European Commission and the innovation agenda; open innovation - the role of multinationals in a global lab; joint programming of research.

**Source:** <http://cordis.europa.eu/11>



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