



NewsEurideas



October 2011 Issue

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The Future of Research and Innovation in Europe

An overview of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) would highlight the EU's ambition to achieve or maintain world leadership in specific prioritised areas together with its determination to meet Europe's requirements for employment and competitiveness. Expectations for FP7 projects are quite high, as can be seen from the considerable (€7 billion) boost in its budget. Compared to the previous framework, the future is expected to see the creation of almost 174, 000 jobs in the short term and nearly 450, 000 jobs in the long term as well as roughly €80 billion in GDP growth over 15 years.

Ultimately, we need to remember that beyond the obvious economic benefits that research funding provides for the EU, innovation is the lifeline of any durable, long-term policy plan. In this respect, the FP7 programme frames the key questions very precisely: what are the benefits for citizens and for researchers?

Our objective in this month's issue is to explore the scope of FP7 programmes by going on a journey of observation. Thus, we will present some of the programme's features through the eyes of a person directly involved in evaluating its results, and then we will see the projects from the perspective of the researchers involved.

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Interview with Peter Fisch

Peter Fisch is Head of Unit for “Ex-Post Evaluation” at DG Research and Innovation’s “Framework programme - Interinstitutional relations” Directorate. He and his team were in charge of organising the Interim Evaluation of FP7 and the Annual FP7 Monitoring Report for 2010. Dr. Fisch kindly agreed to share some information with us regarding the FP7 programme and its scope.

On a broader scale, what are the benefits for citizens and researchers with regard to the FP7 goals?

The key subjects of the FP7 research portfolio correspond to the key concerns of European citizens – health, climate, energy, food ... to name just a few. These issues are of such a complexity that tackling them only at national level would not allow the creation of all possible synergies. Pooling our resources in Europe will allow us to stay at the cutting edge of these central areas for our future developments.

Regarding the international dimension of the programme, how does the FP7 programme plan to attract research talent from outside Europe?

Attracting the best researchers to work in Europe is part of a broader strategy to stimulate the exchange of knowledge with other world regions – for mutual benefit and therefore in both directions. The success of this approach is illustrated by the 169 countries involved in this supposedly “European” Research Programme.

How does FP7 advance the idea of attractiveness of a career in Europe?

Creating better framework conditions for scientific

careers is at the heart of the European Research Area. The Framework Programme supports this most visibly through the „Marie-Curie” training and mobility schemes and through the „European Research Council”, providing individual grants to the most excellent researchers. Less visible, but probably equally important are the career perspectives offered through thousands of collaborative research projects currently under way.

What is the strategy within FP7 concerning the objective of increasing participation and strengthening partnerships with the private sector?

This issue is key for a success of the Europe 2020 strategy for inclusive and sustainable growth. Improving our competitiveness can not be achieved without an active role of industry in research and innovation. Within the Framework Programmes, there is a long tradition of substantive industry involvement. In FP7, we try to closely focus on the key issues for both big and small companies – and we also work hard to further simplify the participation modalities.

In comparison to previous frameworks would you say FP7 puts more or less focus on young researchers’ career perspectives?

Framework Programmes identified themselves always as drivers of change – and therefore young researchers have always received special attention. FP7 has added the “European Research Council” to the portfolio of initiatives – and most of the funding there goes precisely to “starting grants” for highly promising young researchers.

Let's talk science

How Einstein's dream was surpassed

When it comes to science and research, it's not a leap of faith to think beyond your limits. The boundaries of knowledge have always been pushed by the imagination and determination of people who dare to try even when they know they might fail. But this article... is about persistence and success.

Consider the famous case of Einstein and his dream to trap a photon in a box for at least a couple of seconds. Just recently, a team of French scientists have succeeded in doing just that. They even exceeded expectations by maintaining a constant number of photons in a high-quality microware cavity for a long and steady fixed length of time. This ambitious goal was funded by the FP7 framework of the European Commission with an impressive EUR 5,300,000 for the AQUATE (Atomic QUAntum TEchnologies) project and by the European Research Council with an extra EUR 2.5 million for the DECLIC (Exploring the Decoherence of Light in Cavities) project that accompanies the first one. Without getting into too much technical detail, it is worth mentioning that this marks the first time that a complete experiment on quantum stabilisation was achieved. When you consider that they managed to capture the basic unit of light, the photon, in a box with ultra-reflective mirrors — though I'm sure they wouldn't put the issue quite so lightly — it boggles the mind that we've come so far in understanding the world around us. Photons are considered to be the ultimate existential particle in physics and they are all around us. Yet, when a photon comes in contact with the human eye, it is lost in the stream of information coded by the brain. In fact, as you look at your computer right now, an enormous number of photons are being destroyed.

Be that as it may, there may be practical applications from the accomplishment. Stabilisations have a significant role in our lives because they facilitate the operation of many systems around us. Like as not, we take these systems for granted and don't put too much thought into how they work, such as the oven, for example. Although the accomplishment has no immediate applications possible at this time, it is considered to be an important step forward in the field of quantum computing that will eventually make supercomputers obsolete. This triumph shows yet again that it is worth investing in research and innovation as it paves the way to a very different future.

By Cosmina Marian

For more information please visit:

<http://www.cnrs.fr/index.php>





The RenErgEuReg project

We talked with Mr. Simion Crețu, General Director of the Central Regional Development Agency in Romania, about a recent project financed by FP7. The Agency assures the sustainable development of the Central Region by fighting against imbalances and inequalities pertaining to its inhabitants. Most of its projects are backed by PHARE programmes and by the European Regional Development Fund.

Could you, in a few words, tell us what the project RenErgEuReg is trying to achieve and what is the outcome you are expecting?

The RenERg EuReg project has succeeded in mobilising regional stakeholders concerned about the use of alternative energy and in creating a regional vision on the use of renewable energy sources in the long and medium term. We have created a research cluster in the field of alternative energy which is functioning now, approximately one year before the end of the project and which is involved in projects and activities being developed by member organisations. The Central Region Strategy on the use of renewable energy sources that we developed within the framework of the RenERg EuReg project is a pilot document within the Regions of Romanian, as is the analysis regarding renewable sources of energy.

As you know, the Capacities programme within the FP7 framework is encouraging cross-border and transnational cooperation. In this case, how is the relation with your partners progressing?

The history of our partnership with the Brandenburg region and some of the partners of the RenERg EuReg project dates back to a twinning project in 2001. The common interest we share with the Brandenburg region in promoting the use of alternative energy sources and related technology was what led us to develop this cooperation culminating in the setting up of a representative office of the Brandenburg region in the Central region and in cementing economic collaboration and business between these two regions around the theme of renewable energy systems.

In what way does research in the field of renewable energy sources benefit from regional partnerships?

The Transylvania University in Brasov, which is a leading research centre in the field of renewable energy systems, has taken part in the RenErg EuReg project. Over the period in which the project has been implemented, exchanges of opinion and proposals for collaboration have been made between the Cottbus Technical University and the University of Transylvania in Brasov with one of these proposals looking at Doctoral studies for Transylvania University students in Environment and Resource Management at Cottbus Technical University. In the joint action Plan that we have developed over the period of the project, cooperation in research projects features as a priority for the two regions.

Are there any long-term benefits to international cooperation between regions?

Certainly, collaboration between the Central Region and Brandenburg Land has led to benefits at a number of levels. In the first place, it has seen awareness of the situation in the two regions in terms of research potential and infrastructure and business lead to areas of interest and the identification of joint projects. The involvement of the decision-making authorities from both regions in the implementation of the project and the identification of common interests will lead to the enhancement of the project's results in the long-term and to ensuring the sustainability of the activities started in the RenERg EuReg project. One area that we have certainly succeeded in developing in the long-term is business cooperation between companies from both regions that are active in the energy field. The international brokerage event organized in September 2010 within the framework of the RenERg EuReg will be repeated again this year.

How would you describe the process of applying for funds from the European Commission? Did you receive any support from European institutions for this project, apart from its funding?

From the experience we have in applying for European Commission funds we are observing a trend in reducing bureaucracy, which increases efficiency in implementation and allows applicants to concentrate more on the project's results. The support received from DG Research in implementing the project was very important for us in terms of interpreting the procedures, creating links with other projects funded through FP7, creating synergy with other European Commission programmes (for example the Framework Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation) and establishing links with other European networks (Enterprise Europe Network, National Contact Points FP7).

To find a call please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/page/fp7_calls



The GendeRace project

Interview with Dr. Isabelle Carles



Dr. Isabelle Carles is a lawyer specialising in migration questions from a sociological point of view. She was the coordinator of the comparative EU research project “The Use of Racial Anti-Discrimination laws: Gender and Citizenship in a Multicultural Context” (GendeRace/ FP7 GA SSH7-CT-2007-217237) at the Free University of Brussels (ULB).

Can you tell our readers what your project is about and what its main objective is?

The comparative research project GendeRace analyses the use of racial anti-discrimination laws by women and men from an immigrant background in six European countries (France, Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the UK). The primary objective of GendeRace was to improve our understanding of the phenomenon of multiple discrimination through an analysis of the experiences of both women and men confronted with discrimination. The aim was to stimulate new and complementary actions to better assess the effectiveness of policies and practices aimed at combating discrimination based on race and gender.

One of our hypotheses was that because of the single ground approach to discrimination in the equality legislation of most European countries, the present legal framework does not properly address multiple discrimination on the grounds of both race and gender. We also argued that social relations based on gender and race or ethnicity influence the perception and use of racial anti-discrimination laws. We postulated that men and women experience different kinds of discrimination and react in different ways.

What were your findings?

The research indicated that gender has a significant impact on the experience of racial discrimination. In terms of reporting or seeking support, victims perceive the existence of a number of barriers. For example, in many

contexts, women have a double burden of domestic and economic responsibilities, which can work against their effective opportunity to file a complaint. In general, men tend to lodge more complaints and pursue cases further. Those seeking legal resolution tend to be in Higher Education and steady employment, suggesting that the most vulnerable are those who are the least empowered.

The research revealed that all six countries tended towards creating single laws and equality bodies to deal separately with different types of discrimination. This could be due to several reasons: the lack of an operational definition of multiple discrimination, legal experts' specializing in one type of discrimination and the difficulty individuals have in identifying their experience as multiple. In general, the research found a scarcity of data on multiple discrimination and little co-ordination of data at both national and local levels.

Could you tell us about some of the obstacles you encountered during your research?

We have had to resolve the problems of defining certain concepts such as ‘race’, which are interpreted and accepted in different ways in the various countries investigated.

I see your methodology also included conducting interviews. How was your experience in the field?

Interviews at national level with 70 experts in the field of discrimination and with social partners, as well as those with women and men who have been victims of discrimination are at the heart of this research and provide its richness. They enabled us to reveal not only the level of knowledge achieved in the area of multiple discrimination but also what the various actors and victims of discrimination think and the way they react to it depending on whether they are a woman or a man.

Energy in Europe

Why hydrogen?



Ms Marieke Reijalt has worked in the promotion and dissemination of the use of hydrogen as an energy carrier for almost 10 years in both the US and Europe. Since 2006 she has been the Executive Director of the European Hydrogen Association (EHA) and is coordinating the secretariat of HyRaMP, hosted by EHA. The aims of EHA have been promoting the use of hydrogen in stationary power, portable and vehicle applications to facilitate the development of a climate neutral, independent and competitive energy and transport system in Europe.

What can you tell us about your current project Hydrogen hits the roads?

Hydrogen hits the roads is a campaign in which EHA presents the latest developments in hydrogen and fuel cell deployment. On our website you can find how hydrogen is used on different applications already in your cities or elsewhere. Hydrogen fuel cell buses, for example, are now being deployed in cities like Hamburg, Cologne, London, Aargau-Switzerland, Oslo, Milan and Bolzano. These cities are collaborating within a project called Clean Hydrogen In European Cities (CHIC). HyRaMP, The European Regions and Municipalities Partnership for Hydrogen and Fuel Cells, which EHA is hosting in Brussels, is currently the dissemination partner for this project.

How useful were the European Commission's funding programmes in the achievement of EHA's projects?

The projects which EHA is involved in are funded by the Fuel Cell and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH JU) which is a public-private partnership, co-funded by the industry and the EU, supported by national and regional funding. The EHA is involved in projects that are relevant for its 20 national member associations to support them in disseminating up-to-date information on technological and commercial development of hydrogen applications.

How do advances into Hydrogen fuel research affect our daily lives?

According to original equipment manufacturers and stationary fuel cell system manufacturers there are no technical barriers to the commercial deployment of hydrogen powered applications. The first cars produced in series will hit the market in 2014 and European manufactured fuel cell buses are being sold to the US. Fuel cell vehicles have no emissions at the point of use and offer the same performance and range of conventional fossil fuelled cars. Hydrogen holds three times the energy of gasoline per kilogramme and is an excellent large scale energy storage medium. Electricity produced by renewable sources that cannot be absorbed by the electricity grid may thus be used to generate hydrogen for the use in urban transport applications.

Why should we invest in transport fuelled by hydrogen and not other environmentally friendly energy options?

According to the latest EU Report on Future Transport Fuels hydrogen, electricity and biofuels will be the main options for substituting oil as energy source for propulsion in transport. A great advantage of both electricity and hydrogen is that they can be produced from any primary energy carrier at high efficiency. This offers the opportunity to use different primary energy sources, and especially renewables, in road transport. Fuel cells enable almost the same personal freedom, flexibility, and ease-of-use as we are accustomed to from today's vehicles with internal combustion engines. Hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles (FCVs) for longer-range (>400 km), heavy goods, and public bus transport, complemented by battery electric vehicles (BEVs) for short distances (up to max. 200 km) and lightweight applications will be able to offer new efficient options for European transport markets.

For more information please visit:
<http://www.h2euro.org>

AGENDA



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1 ▶ September 15 – December 14, Poland in Focus

Poland took over the presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1 July. BOZAR will mark the Polish presidency this autumn with an eclectic programme focusing on Polish music, literature and performing arts.

<http://bozar.be>

2 ▶ October 5, Innovation Forum

This year's Innovation Forum will have a particular focus on the climate challenge and resource efficiency, and look at how innovation can unlock the path to green growth and a low-carbon economy.

Don't forget to register:

<http://www.europeanvoice.com/page/3162.aspx>

3 ▶ October 13-16, Book Festival

The Centrale Boekhandel (Central Bookstore) organises the Book Festival at various locations in the Netherlands and Belgium. Mid October the fair will come to Brussels. The books are directly purchased from publishers here and abroad and sold at competitive prices to the visitors.

<http://www.brussels.be>

4 ▶ October 18-19, Resources, recycling and alternative materials and implementation

The event, organised by FEHRL, will be a forum for demonstrating the results and outcomes of recent significant road research projects and their benefits for society and the environment. A number of projects funded by the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) will be featured at the event.

Don't forget to register: <http://www.fehrl.org/index.php?m=306>

5 ▶ October 22-23, Energy Fair

Held at Tour & Taxis, this fair will have all from exhibitions on saving energy, to free individual consultations from experts, conferences, debates and workshops. It is your chance to get the best information on the latest news and products relating to energy.

<http://www.energie2011.be>

6 ▶ October 26, Kaczmarek's Music Tours Europe

J.A.P Kaczmarek, one of the world's most recognised film composers and an Academy Award winner for the film 'Finding Neverland', will give a series of concerts in selected venues across Europe, including Brussels.

<http://www.jan-ap-kaczmarek.com/>