



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH UPDATE

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DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DIRECTORATE *INFORMATION FLASH ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES*

POLICY

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn visits Australia and New Zealand to Reinforce Research Links and Outline New Collaborations.

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn visited Australia on 4-7 March at the invitation of the Australian Government. She visited research infrastructures in Sydney and Canberra, and attended a round table with industry leaders to discuss innovation and linkages between industry and academia. She met Senator Chris Evans, Minister for Science and Research, to discuss current cooperation and prospects for new collaborations on R&I topics of mutual interest. She also met with Australia's Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, for an exchange views on a wide range of R&I issues including societal challenges, working with Asia, improving science education, and increasing public trust in research. She gave a keynote at the 'Universities Australia' Higher Education Conference, where she highlighted Horizon 2020 new opportunities for Australian researchers.

Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn was also invited as an official guest of the New Zealand Government. This visit on 8-9 March allowed to take stock of the excellent collaboration between the EU and New Zealand and to outline ways to strengthen EU-New Zealand cooperation.

The Commissioner met with Steven Joyce, Minister for Science and Innovation, and Tim Groser, Minister for Trade and Climate Change. They discussed our fruitful research cooperation with New Zealand, particularly in the field of the bio-economy, and examined the potential for new collaborations in areas of mutual interest (public health, sustainable cities). The Commissioner also visited Auckland University Bioengineering Institute, which has a partnership with the EU in the area of the 'Virtual Physiological Human', as well as the offices of 'Auckland Uniservices'. She also gave a keynote at Auckland University on EU-New Zealand cooperation in R&I and new opportunities under Horizon 2020.

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EU-ASEAN Year of Science, Technology and Innovation: Commissioner's visit to Singapore

On her way to Australia, Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn visited Singapore, the regional research and innovation hub in South East Asia, in the context of the EU-ASEAN Year of Science, Technology and Innovation. On that occasion the Commissioner met with Lim Chuan Poh, Chairman of Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research, and Dr Francis Yeoh, Chief Executive Officer of the National Research Foundation, and senior managers of EU companies in Singapore (Rolls-Royce, Vestas Wind System).

The Commissioner also met with a group of leading EU and ASEAN science journalists to share views on EU-ASEAN R&I cooperation and on potential for further development of our bi-regional partnership with South East Asian countries. This press programme, which allowed journalists to visit key research infrastructures and successful EU-ASEAN research projects in several ASEAN countries was organised by SEA-EU-NET project

The Commissioner also pronounced a keynote in front of a large audience at Singapore' leading University, Nanyang Technological University, where she announced the organisation of the 'Partnership Symposium' on EU-ASEAN Research and Innovation Cooperation during ESOF 2012 in Dublin.

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Strategic Forum for International Science and Technology Cooperation (SFIC)

The [13th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation](#) (SFIC) took place on 9 March in Brussels. SFIC adopted new rules of procedure and discussed its draft annual report. The Commission outlined the forthcoming Communication on International Cooperation in Research and Innovation, and invited SFIC delegates to provide written input to a series of still-open questions. The Commission also presented the 2011 Communication on *Small business, big world - a new partnership to help SMEs seize global opportunities*.

The progress of SFIC initiatives was discussed, including cooperation with China (agreement on thematic priorities and organisation of a workshop on mobility with ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility); the USA (roadmap concept paper); and India (India's first reactions to the strategic R&I agenda, and upcoming stakeholder conference 31 May-1 June in Brussels).

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BILATERAL RELATIONS

Monitoring R&I Cooperation with Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Further Progress on ERA Expected

The Subcommittee on Innovation, monitoring progress on research and innovation from a pre-accession point of view, met in Brussels on 27 February 2012. The meeting took stock of FYRoM's increased participation in FP7 and its efforts to promote cooperation, notably through stronger engagement with SMEs and better use of Marie Curie actions.

Even if FYRoM is in balance in terms of funding obtained and contribution paid, further efforts are needed, particularly in the lead up to Horizon 2020. The Commission stressed the key importance of good administrative capacity, and the need for regular attendance in FP7 management committee meetings. The EC also regretted that the announced Strategy on Research and Technology was still not fully established, and asked for a timetable on adoption. FYRoM explained their need to consult further with their scientific community, and to articulate more fully the innovation dimension. The Commission noted FYRoM's ambitious goal to increase R&I investment from a current 0.30% of GDP to 1.80% by 2015. FYRoM was also encouraged to establish, as a matter of priority, the reliable statistics necessary to implement and monitor their announced strategy and facilitate integration into the ERA.

The FYRoM Deputy Prime Minister, who also holds the portfolio of Minister for European Integration, welcomed EC's comments and personally expressed commitment to follow the progress on R&I with competent ministers. She fully agreed on the importance of increasing R&I efforts as key driver for progress in other areas and in the overall integration process.

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14th EU-Africa Joint Task Force Meeting

The 14th meeting of the Africa-EU Joint Task Force (JAES) was held on 8-9 March in Brussels. The opening plenary session was co-chaired by Senior Officials from the EEAS, the EC and the AU Commission. The meeting was also attended by the AU rotating Presidency; by the EU and African co-chairs of the Joint Expert Groups; the EU and Pan-African Parliaments; Civil Society from both continents; senior EU and AU Officials, as well as representatives from Member States, the African Regional Economic Communities, African Development Bank, and European Investment Bank.

The JAES was reaffirmed as the overarching framework of R&I cooperation between EU and Africa. However, there was broad agreement that additional efforts had to be made to realise the full potential of the JAES, notably in the perspective of the next EU-Africa Summit. Participants exchanged views on ways to improve the current JAES architecture, as well as on the monitoring and evaluation of the Joint Expert Groups' efficiency. Participants were also briefed on financing possibilities currently explored to support the JAES more effectively, including the JAES Support Mechanism and proposed Pan-African Programme in the new Development and Cooperation Instrument for the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

It was agreed that the next JEG8 meeting would take place on 10-11 May in Dar El Salam, back to back with the annual IST Conference. The next Africa-EU Joint Task Force will take place in Addis Ababa in last quarter of 2012.

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EU, Algeria sign S&T Agreement

The EU and Algeria agreed to deepen their cooperation in the area of scientific research. The new S&T Agreement was signed in Algiers by EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Commissioner Stefan Fule and Algerian Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci. Algeria is the fifth southern Mediterranean country to conclude such a S&T Cooperation Agreement with the EU.

Algerian scientists already actively participate in the FP7. To date, 26 Algerian participants in EU research projects have received €2.3 million. In addition, 10 researchers have received Marie Curie grants to enable them to carry out research in the EU. The new agreement deepens cooperation and opens the way for EU scientists to participate in Algerian research projects. As for other S&T Agreements a joint committee will meet once a year to share information and identify promising new areas of collaboration. The agreement also provides for the co-financing of new research activities.

All Mediterranean countries have been invited to take part next month in the first ever EuroMed conference on Research and Innovation in Barcelona, Spain.

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EU-Peru Structured S&T Dialogue

In the margins of the 2010 EU-LAC Summit in Madrid, the Peruvian National Research Council ([CONCYTEC](#)) and DG RTD agreed to engage in a regular structured S&T dialogue. A visit to Peru on 23 March by a delegation from DG RTD's International Cooperation Directorate provided the opportunity for in-depth discussions on S&T policy and for identifying fresh cooperation opportunities in areas of mutual interest. On the Peruvian side, meetings involved representatives from the Ministries for External Relations, Education, Production, and Environment; the Congressional S&T Commission; the National Science and Technology Council (CONCYTEC), the National Planning Bureau (CEPLAN), the Peruvian

Cooperation Agency, the Chamber of Commerce, as well as representatives of the main Peruvian universities and of the National Assembly of Rectors.

Peruvian authorities are currently exploring a variety of scenarios to increase S&T investment from the present 0.17% of GDP to 0.7% of GDP by 2016. Options considered include: repatriating senior Peruvian researchers (as in Argentina's [RAICES Programme](#)); increasing investments in research infrastructures, with specific focus on social inclusion, reduction of inequalities, gender issues, and taking into account the specific needs of different regions.

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EU-LAC Joint Initiative for R&I

Senior Officials from the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean met on 20-21 March 2012 in Concepción, Chile in the context of the EU-CELAC Joint Initiative for R&I. The event gathered representatives from 23 countries, the Commission, the EEAS, multilateral organisations active in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as INCONET and other support projects. Actions planned for 2012 included: (a) the implementation of several Living Labs under the ICT working group co-led by Chile and Finland; (b) the topping up with national resources of projects on biorefinery (bioeconomy and food security working group co-led by Argentina and France), and on energy projects co-led by Mexico and Spain; (c) preparatory activities for the [Biodiversa ERANET](#) planned by the biodiversity and climate change working group.

The meeting also stressed the need for joint development of master and PhD programmes in areas of shared interest, as well as the drive to strengthen innovation, notably through the Knowledge and Innovation Centres Network under preparation with funding under the Instrument for Cooperation with industrialised and other high-income countries (ICI+). A meeting of senior representatives of funding agencies, planned for September, will focus on ways better to align national funding with bi-regional objectives and activities. Progress on the implementation of the Joint Initiative will be presented to the EU-CELAC Summit, scheduled for 26-27 January 2013 in Santiago de Chile.

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E-mobility and Smart Grids: Closer Cooperation between JRC and the US

On the occasion of the Transatlantic Economic Council meeting of 29 November 2011, the JRC signed a [Letter of Intent](#) for closer cooperation with the US Department of Energy on e-mobility and smart grids. The agreement provides a basis for the setting up of two Electric Vehicle and Smart Grid Interoperability Centres, one at the Argonne National Laboratories, near Chicago, and the other at JRC Ispra.

The twin centres will play an active role in promoting a common approach between the US and EU for testing electric vehicle and smart grid equipment, to foster global standards. They will also address end-to-end

interoperability issues between e-vehicles, smart grids and recharging systems. The two centres will provide testing facilities for electric vehicles and related supply equipment, and participate in each others' inter-laboratory comparisons. Most importantly, they will promote links between the US and EU vehicle industries on the key issue of electric vehicle interoperability.

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Reinforcing S&T Cooperation with Jordan

The second Joint Committee meeting with Jordan, under the EU-Jordan Association Agreement took place in Brussels on 20 March. The meeting was co-chaired by DG RTD and by the Jordanian Higher Council for Science and Technology, and involved representatives from EEAS, DG EAC & DG INFSO.

The Jordanian side provided information on their new National Science and Technology Innovation Policy and Strategy 2012-2016. For R&D, strategic priorities include water, energy, food security and health. In the area of innovation, Jordan demonstrates a commitment to move from its current fragmented approach to a coordinated national strategy built around 6 innovation clusters: medical and pharmaceuticals, clean technologies, architecture and construction, ICTs, education and career development, and banking and finance.

Projects discussed included: ERA-Wide projects (for capacity-building benefits); the JOIN-MED project (for its ability to unite ICT actors of the region in a fast changing political environment); the ENPi-funded SRTD project (for its potential to increase R&I sectors' contribution to growth and employment); the BILAT project EU-JordanNET (which will allow Jordan to organise a regional event in October 2012). Marie Curie actions were also presented in detail, with the EU encouraging Jordan to make better use of the scheme and increase its current, still limited, participation. The Euro-Mediterranean Conference on 2-3 April in Barcelona and its expected contribution to thematic priority setting for the region were also discussed.

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PROJECTS

Health: High Success Rate for Projects Involving US Partners

Collaborative consortia with participants from US institutions have been the most successful in the Health thematic area. So far, 256 proposals for collaborative projects with US partners have led to 75 [signed](#) project agreements. This success rate of almost 30% is more than double the average for proposals without partners from the US (13%). The inclusion of US institutions might in itself be a quality stamp for proposals. In recognition of the opening of NIH programmes to EU researchers, participants based in the US are eligible for funding by the Health programme. The BILAT-USA also promotes FP7 in the US and provides help to applicants.

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World Malaria Day: Time to Take Stock of EU Research's Contribution in Fighting the Scourge

25 April is the 'World Malaria Day', reminding us that 700,000 lives are claimed every year in sub-Saharan Africa alone. Between 2002 and 2011, EU-funded research has played a key role in fighting the disease. Over €200 million have been invested through FP6 and FP7 to support a large number of collaborative research projects, as well as broad-based international partnerships ([EDCTP](#)) engaged in the fight against malaria, particularly in Africa.

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EU Research Unveils New Tools to Fight Malaria

Insecticide-impregnated bed nets and anti-mosquito sprays are key preventive measures to fight malaria. For the first time in a generation, the disease is declining in parts of Africa. However, growing insecticide resistance is becoming a serious challenge and threatens to undermine the success of this strategy. Under the umbrella of the EU-funded [AvecNet](#) project, EU and African researchers from 12 countries are working together to ensure that insecticides continue to be effective in the fight against malaria. This large €12 million project has two complementary objectives: to develop and test new families of insecticides both in the laboratory and in the field; and, at the same time, to better manage the use of insecticides so as to ensure that resistance to current insecticides remains as low as possible.

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Pregnancy and Malaria: New Knowledge for Better Prevention against Emerging Threats

More than 9000 pregnant women in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, India and Papua New Guinea benefitted from special medical attention as part of the EU-supported [PregVax](#) project. They are representative of the approximately 25 million pregnant women who are exposed each year to *Plasmodium vivax*, the parasite which causes Malaria infections. Unlike its better-known variant *Plasmodium falciparum*, we know surprisingly little about how *Plasmodium vivax* affects pregnant women and their babies. Supported by a €2.9 million EU grant, the 10 [PregVax](#) partners succeeded in getting new insights on the workings of this parasite, opening the way for better prevention and treatment.

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EVENTS

JRC Trains Brazil Scientists in Natural Disaster Risk Management

In the framework of the EU-Brazil Sectoral Dialogue on Flood Forecasting and Monitoring, two Brazilian scientists from Brazil's National Centre of Natural Disasters Monitoring and Alert ([CEMADEN](#)) are currently trained in JRC-Ispra to gain experience in flood forecasting and monitoring of soil moisture using remote sensing.

This is one of the concrete results of the Letter of Intent signed between the JRC and the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI). In this context, the MCTI launched in 2011 the National Centre for Natural Disasters Monitoring and Alerts (CEMADEN), whose job is to produce reliable warnings in order to assist decisions by public authorities on how best to protect communities. CEMADEN will receive meteorological, hydrological, and geo-technical data from various sources, develop models, and produce warnings on risks of natural disasters.

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"Diabetesity" International Conference: Addressing Together a World-Wide Challenge

Diabetes causes severe health complications and is the fifth leading cause of death world-wide. The number of persons suffering from the "type 2" form of this disease is set to rise to some 900 million globally by 2030, with devastating health and economic implications. To counter this sinister scenario, increased attention is given to research into the environmental and genetic risk factors for diabetes and obesity in specific populations.

Under its current Research Framework Programme, the European Union supports a series of major scientific projects to better understand and combat type-2 diabetes. In this context, the Health Directorate organised on 9-10 February in Brussels a high-level international conference '[DIABESITY-A World-Wide Challenge](#)', to work towards a global initiative on gene-environment interactions in diabetes-obesity in specific populations. The event brought together over 600 participants, including leading international scientists, national and international funding agencies, industry representatives, and policy-makers from the EU and the rest of the world.

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EU-US Cooperation on Critical Infrastructure Protection and Space Situational Awareness

The US Department of State hosted an EU-US workshop on Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) and Space Situational Awareness (SSA) on 14-15 March. Participants came from DG ENTR (lead), the Joint Research Centre, the EEAS, the General Secretariat of the Council, the European Defence Agency, EU Satellite Centre and the European Space Agency. DG HOME was also represented. The US delegation was composed of representatives of the Departments of State, the Department of Homeland Security, the Defence Department. Representatives of the EU and US private sectors (EADS, Boeing, SES, European Satellite Operators Association) attended part of the event. During the discussions the importance of FP7 projects related to Space Research was underlined. Projects on space weather and near earth objects, with participants from the U.S. (e.g. NASA, NOAA) are key tools for transatlantic cooperation in this area.

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EU-Central America - ENLACE Travel Grant Scheme: Third Call Now Open!

[ENLACE](#) is a FP7 international cooperation network (INCO-NET) aiming at reinforcing S&T cooperation between the EU and Central America. This travel grant scheme promotes exchanges between Central American and EU researchers and encourages contacts between research institutions for joint participation in FP7. It supports researchers from the EU and the Central American countries to meet their counterparts for joint preparation of project proposals and cooperation in one of the upcoming FP7 calls (July 2012) of the Cooperation and People Programmes. The third call for participation is now open from 9 March to 10 May. Researchers may stay up to 30 days in Central America or the EU for the joint preparation of a project proposal.

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JoRIEW Scientific Training Program

The [JoRIEW scientific training program](#) took place at the Hashemite University in Zarqa, Jordan on 18-22 March. The program included four specialized training modules; Planning of Renewable and Sustainable Energy and Water Systems, Optimisation of Energy Systems, Energy Systems analysis on the EnergyPLAN model, Integration of Reverse Osmosis and/or Membrane Bioreactor Processes with Hybrid Power Generation Systems using Renewable Energy Sources for Efficient Water Production and Utilization. JoRIEW network includes members from Jordanian universities, research centres, governmental bodies, NGO's and the private sector.

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Korea - Eureka Days Conference

The first Korea - Eureka Days Conference took place in Brussels on 21-23 March. Korea is at present the only non EU country being associated to [Eureka](#). Since in 2009, Korean companies, and especially SMEs, have actively participated in the Eureka schemes in particular under the [Eurostar flagship](#). Business commitment to Eureka, both from Europe and from Korea, has enabled the development of new services and products beneficial to both sides.

During the conference, Korea's Deputy Minister of Knowledge Economy and the President of Korea's Institute for Advancement of Technology met with high-level officials from the Commission and representatives from Member States and Industry. Issues discussed included: definition of areas of mutual interest for R&I cooperation, standards, testbeds and joint initiatives in specific areas such as industrial technologies, nanotech and energy. These exchanges underlined the need for both partners to increase participation in each other's public funding programmes.

This timely event took place on the eve of the EU-Korea Summit scheduled for the end of March in Seoul.

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ITER Inaugurates the 5th Most Powerful Supercomputer in the World

On 19 March, in the presence of Japan's Vice-minister of MEXT (Ministry for Science, Technology and Education), the President of Japan's Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA), the CEO and Chairman of the French company Bull, the ITER Broader Approach inaugurated the supercomputer "Helios". It was built by Bull in Rokkasho, in the north of Japan, and delivered on schedule despite the difficult times facing the country. "Helios" is currently the fifth most powerful computer in the world. It will help the fusion research community speed up their work on ITER. Rokkasho, ITER Japanese site, lies in the Tohoku area, just outside the area devastated by last year's earthquake and tsunami. This inauguration gives a very positive signal to this region. The construction of this supercomputer was funded, and its progress supervised, by Fusion 4Energy, the EU ITER agency in Barcelona.

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High-Level EU-Japan-US Trilateral on the Strategic Implications of Global Shortages in Critical Materials

This highly successful Trilateral meeting involving the EU, Japan and the US was the second such event organised by DG RTD Industrial Technologies Directorate, Materials Research Unit. Following on the 2011 Trilateral hosted by the US Department of Energy, this year's event was particularly timely. In addition to the general context (WTO action by EU, US and Japan against China), this meeting marked the first anniversary of the signature of the EU-Japan Science and Technology Agreement and was the one of the key events specifically foreseen in the EU-Japan S&T Roadmap for 2011-2013.

The high level of representation from governments (US Secretary of State for Energy Steven Chu, Japanese Minister for Energy Yukio Edano, EU Ambassador to Japan), from other countries (AUS, CDN); from the EU, US and Japanese industries (Siemens, GE, Hitachi, etc.), from the EP, and from Civil Society (NGOs, consumer associations) testifies to the truly strategic nature of research on critical raw materials, and to the importance and timeliness of the issues discussed.

In addition to the open sessions, which generated considerable press coverage in Asia, Europe and the US, technical closed workshops identified key research activities underway, as well as new cooperation opportunities between the three partners, and open to other countries, in order to accelerate the process and share costs in the precompetitive area. The most significant joint project in preparation between the EU and Japan is a joint call for proposals on rare earths set for this summer. Additional calls in related areas (waste management, recycling) will also support collaboration.

Participants were invited to the next trilateral planned to take place in Brussels in 2013.

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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS (APRIL – JUNE 2012)

<i>Joint Committee Meetings</i>		
27 April	Switzerland	Geneva
6 June	Egypt	Brussels
8 June	New Zealand	Brussels
11 June	Faroe Island	Torshavn
May (tbc)	Moldova	Brussels
<i>Other Meetings</i>		
18 May	EU-ASEAN SOM	Myanmar
14 June	WBC Platform	Tirana
14 June	Eastern Partnership	Brussels

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