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Aborted ERC contest is reported to ombudsman

Candidate complains of irregularities in choosing new head

AN ECONOMIST SHORT-LISTED to lead the European Research Council has complained to the European Ombudsman about how the appointment was cancelled last month, citing “serious concerns regarding the irregularities I witnessed in the final stages of the selection process”.

Ramon Marimon, an economist at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, and Spain’s former science secretary, was one of three candidates due to be interviewed for the new ERC director-general position. When the position was advertised 116 people applied; 10 were interviewed to produce the short-list.

Marimon says that he was due to attend a final interview on 16 September, but was asked by members of the Scientific Council to withdraw. The two other candidates also did so, before the appointment process was publicly abandoned [*RE 25/11/10, p4*].

“There’s been no explanation from the Commission on why the process had to be cancelled,” Marimon told *Research Europe*. “My main concern is that this is a very bad step for the ERC.”

The ERC was previously headed jointly by a secretary-general and a director. The European Commission and the ERC’s Scientific Council had agreed to merge the two roles on the recommendation of a major external review published in July 2009. Some senior researchers had hoped that the change would provide the fledgling agency with a stronger administrative foundation.

But in a statement issued on 16 November the Scientific Council said it was ending the process, and that a working group chaired by Robert-Jan Smits—the top official in the Commission’s research directorate—would review the agency’s structure, again.

Marimon—an experienced European operator who chaired the outside evaluation of the Framework 6 programme in 2004—suggests that the step may signal faltering support for the ERC at the Commission’s research directorate. “The previous commissioner [Janez Potocnik] was a strong supporter of the ERC, but the new one [Maire Geoghegan-Quinn] only likes to speak about ‘innovation’,” he says (*see News, page 6*).

After writing to Geoghegan-Quinn in September

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and Smits in October, Marimon complained officially to the European Ombudsman on 5 November, before getting a short response from Smits on 12 November. He says the Smits letter failed to explain the Commission’s rationale (*see* <http://www.eui.eu/Personal/rmarimon/>).

Marimon also says that it is “very naïve” of the Scientific Council to “create expectations” that the Smits task force can fix the ERC’s problems. He adds that it is rare for the Ombudsman’s office to receive complaints “at this level”.

Geoghegan-Quinn arrived in January. In July, Smits replaced Jose Manuel Silva Rodriguez (also from Spain) as her top official. Rodriguez is now returning to the agriculture directorate, and some senior researchers say Smits is more supportive of basic research and of autonomy for the ERC: a characterisation strongly disputed by Marimon.

Current ERC director Jack Metthey and president Helga Nowotny each declined to comment on Marimon’s complaint. But regarding the task force, Nowotny said in an email, “you, and everybody else, will be able to judge the outcome. My own expectations are high and I am also quite confident.”

In a written statement, Mark English, spokesman for DG Research, said: “All research and innovation policy is now aimed at creating an Innovation Union in Europe. The Commission has made clear it sees the ERC as central to that objective.”

He added that national ministers have endorsed that view, and that heads-of-state will do so shortly. “This new political context and profile for the ERC has led the ERC to request the Commission to set up a Task Force to explore future ERC governance and—pending the outcome—to cancel the merger of the ERC positions that had been requested by the ERC at an earlier stage when circumstances were different.”

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Innovation dreams

Commission lacks the tools to make us all 'innovate'

It is perhaps understandable that our political leaders, lacking both ideology and imagination, want 'a plan' to pull Europe's economies out of crisis.

This craving may partly explain the idea of the Innovation Union developed by the European Commission and now being energetically pursued by research commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn.

However the full-fledged devotion to the Innovation Union on the part of the research directorate—shortly to become the research and innovation directorate—carries hazards for the EU's existing research programmes.

The main danger rests in the plain fact that, while we have a fair idea of the tools and mechanisms needed for high-quality research, we really have very little idea how to foster 'innovation' among businesses and their customers. Even if we did, it is hard to see how actions in Brussels could promote innovation in societies as diverse as Sicily and Scotland. In short, the case for an Innovation Union is not convincing.

It appears to rest on the idea that Europe lacks innovative zeal. Its advocates constantly dwell on the alleged superiority of the United States. Their arguments have been developed in influential books such as Amar Bhide's *Venturesome Economy*, which holds that it is the daring of consumers in the United States that drives US economic supremacy.

This analysis is grievously out of date: Bhide published just before the great crash of 2008, since when it has dawned on us that the previous US boom rested not on innovation, but on borrowing too cheaply from China.

A second, related problem is the underlying assumption that the US conception of 'innovation' is to be aspired to. Is it really necessary for small, service businesses in cities as diverse and successful as Amsterdam or Barcelona to aspire to the alleged proficiency of their rivals in places as dreary and homogenous as Houston or Philadelphia?

Even if the basic diagnosis is accepted, and our businesses and consumers need to think and act more like their US counterparts, how well-equipped is the EU to help? If it is as ill-equipped as we suspect, then diverting the research directorate behind this unrealistic objective will carry a cost. The successor to the Framework Programme is taking shape right now, and calls for such prosaic improvements as simpler applications processes, a beefed-up European Research Council, more competition between industrial projects, and less committee work.

Underpinning that is the equally important task of establishing a genuine European Research Area. Geoghegan-Quinn breezily says she will aim to implement this by 2014 (*see News, page 6*). Unfortunately, it is simply not credible for the commissioner, or anyone else, to state that there will be no barriers to the free movement of researchers and grants across Europe by 2014.

The Innovation Union was due to be debated by heads of state at the European Council this month, but the discussion has been deferred until February by the latest euro crisis. It is to be hoped, but cannot be expected, that then our leaders will eschew blandishments about innovation, and turn some overdue attention to the dreary, brass-tacks actions that could make a genuine, long-term contribution to European competitiveness.

elsewhere

"We're scouring the world for exceptional talent."

Neil Turok, director of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Canada, says the institute is recruiting high-calibre physicists to fill five new research chairs, each one named after a renowned physicist. *Nature*, 29/11/10.

"When the economy gets better, people stay put."

Lisa Piguet, associate director for MBA admissions and marketing at the IMD business school in Lausanne, Switzerland, says that, while demand for MBA courses rises during economic troubles, it falls again when recovery is in sight. *European Voice*, 25/11/10.

"Don't play with fire. The patience of the Iranian nation has limits. If it runs out of patience, bad consequences will await enemies."

Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's nuclear programme, responds to two bomb attacks in Tehran that killed one Iranian nuclear scientist and injured another. Iran suspects the US and Israel were behind the attacks. *ScienceInsider*, 29/11/10.

"This government has done more for innovation in the past month than the previous government has done in seven years."

Frans Nauta, former secretary of the Dutch government's innovation platform, is not concerned that the platform is being scrapped by the new government to boost small business exports and pay off the national debt. *Volkskrant*, 25/11/10.

"Skyscrapers make a person feel small, but a scientist should feel big."

Skolkovo Fund president Viktor Vekselberg explains why he is opposed to the construction of skyscrapers at Russia's planned silicon-valley-style technology hub in Skolkovo, near Moscow. *The Moscow Times*, 18/11/10.

decade

"One of the biggest problems scientists tell us about today are the slow procedures. This can save months of waiting."

A spokesman for research commissioner *Phillippe Busquin* says unsuccessful Framework 5 applicants will no longer have to wait several months to hear they have been rejected.

Research Europe, 14 December 2000

what's going on

Higher profile for philanthropic funding

Philanthropic funding is increasingly important to universities who want to pursue offbeat research, says a research foundations steering group. The group told the European Forum on Philanthropy and Research Funding in Stuttgart this month that money from research foundations offered universities a niche in which they did not have to comply with impact and other conventional targets. The group said European research institutions should try to source their philanthropic income internationally as an alternative to traditional public and private funding.

Italy and UK decrease their contributions to ESRF

Italy and the UK are to cut their financial contributions to the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility, according to a three-year plan approved on 3 December. ESRF director-general Francesco Sette said Italy's investments will drop from 15 to 13 per cent of the ESRF budget and the UK's from 14 to 10 per cent. Other members will maintain their contribution to the project in Grenoble, France, but the pullouts leave a 6 per cent hole in the ESRF's funding. It will be filled by reducing the number of beamlines at the accelerator complex and/or by reducing its operating time as well as other measures.

Commission launches open access research portal

The European Commission is to establish OpenAIRE—the Open Access Infrastructure for Research in Europe—to provide access to all papers and data from work funded by Framework 7. OpenAIRE will gather publications from local repositories that comply with its open-access guidelines and make them available on a single portal.

EU climate funding under fire

Aid agencies and developing-world governments are outraged by the EU's decision, revealed at the beginning of the Cancún summit, to provide half its pledged 'fast-start' climate change funding as loans or equity rather than grants. At Copenhagen a year ago, richer nations pledged \$30 billion (23bn euros) to developing countries for climate change mitigation under fast start between 2010 and 2012. But they have yet to deliver the cash. At the beginning of the Cancún summit last month, the EU announced €7.2bn of funding over three years.

Medicines agency opens access to research documents

The European Medicines Agency has simplified access to research and analytic documents on human and veterinary medicines. The agency will grant wider access to all documents that concern medicines whose approval has already been confirmed. The regulation will give the public access to data gathered from clinical trials and to research information from the initial development through to marketing.

Roadmap urges better inclusion of Russian research

Russia and Europe have agreed to increase the number of researchers who move between their borders under an agreement signed on 30 November. The Roadmap for Action 2010-2012 gives Russian researchers greater access to the Framework 7 People Programme, which supports exchanges between researchers. The roadmap also includes suggestions on increasing the potential for twinning projects, such as better research alignment and the creation of mutual research priorities.

europe

ESF-Eurohorcs merger to be finalised in May

Eurohorcs and the European Science Foundation will finalise the details of their merger in early May next year, *Research Europe* has learned.

The two organisations will hold meetings throughout April and May 2011, during which they will discuss the structure of the new European Research Organisation and set a date for the merger. They will also talk about the funding of the organisation, which will have an annual budget comparable to that of the ESF. In May 2011, the ESF will hold a special assembly to vote on the merger plans.

The concept of the European Research Organisation, the merged organisation's working title, has been under consideration since 2008, when the two organisations published the *Vision on a Globally Competitive European Research Area* and an action roadmap.

Eurohorcs, an organisation that represents the heads of European research councils, wants to offer its members a more formal structure by merging with the ESF.

"Eurohorcs' present informal structure made it increasingly difficult to respond quickly enough to the various developments and ideas brought forward by the EU," Dieter Imboden, the president of Eurohorcs, told *Research Europe*. He added that due to this informal

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structure Eurohorcs lacked the resources to develop a stronger strategy for the future role of national research organisations within the European Research Area.

"Thus, Eurohorcs has been confronted with the choice of either creating its own formal structure, including a secretariat, or of seeking close cooperation or even a merger with the ESF," Imboden says.

Most members of Eurohorcs are, through their organisations, already members of the European Science Foundation. Eurohorcs organisations contribute the largest share of the ESF budget, and the two groups have a long history of working together on policy.

"The intention behind the merger plan is to create a united voice for science in Europe that would be a powerful driving force to build the ERA," says Marja Makarow, the European Science Foundation chief executive.

In preparation of the merger the ESF cancelled its 2011 European collaborative research programme funding, and the organisation's Eurocores Themes programme has been delayed next year, pending discussions during the general assembly.

EU prodding helps nations move towards ERA

EU nations spend an average of 4.5 per cent of public R&D funding on joint programmes with other countries, according to figures released by the statistics agency Eurostat on 23 November.

But in most nations only a small fraction of this spending was organised by the country itself, the majority instead going through pan-European research structures, such as European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology Initiatives, or international projects such as the European Space Agency.

The study shows the importance of EU programmes in driving transnational research, says Eurostat. But the pilot only gathered data from 15 countries between 2007 and 2008 and must be treated with "great caution" due to its experimental nature and incomplete levels of data, a spokeswoman for the agency added.

According to the figures, Belgium—in part through its high contribution to ESA—spends the largest portion of its R&D budget on transnational research at 12 per cent. Meanwhile Poland spent only 1 per cent on such research. Switzerland and Germany both spent higher than average at 5.12 and 5.45 per cent respectively.

Although unreliable in isolation and not account-

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ing for programmes started since 2008, the data is part of a larger effort to evaluate progress in developing the European Research Area, a spokesman for the European Commission told *Research Europe*. The results will eventually feed into a new edition of the Science, Technology and Competitiveness report, to be published in mid-2011.

But despite their inconclusive nature, the statistics hint that the funding for collaborative research may not yet match Commission ambitions, says Ohid Yaqub, a science policy analyst at the think tank RAND Europe. "The kind of rhetoric that surrounds setting up [the ERA] doesn't seem to match the amount of money put forward," he says.

As R&D budgets come under more pressure, transnational research will need more varied and explicit justifications, he adds, especially if spending on EU programmes comes at the expense of national ones. "Pooling R&D resources and reducing repetition in R&D overlooks the importance of building up local skills and capacity. If countries pool their resources, we need a good justification for why it's better," says Yaqub.

Breakaway countries look for support for patent cooperation plan

A group of seven countries, frustrated at the lack of progress on a common EU patent, are planning to go it alone and strike their own deal.

Estonia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK are considering an “enhanced cooperation” on the EU patent. This last resort instrument allows member states to move forward at different speeds or towards different goals on a given issue, within the EU’s institutional framework. It has been used in the past on cross-border divorce laws.

At the Competitiveness Council on 25 and 26 November in Brussels, “the Commission and the Council’s legal services made a clear statement that there is no legal impediment to an enhanced cooperation,” says an EU diplomat. But enhanced cooperation must not distort competition or lead to discrimination against some member states, other member states say.

The seven are looking for allies, as an enhanced cooperation can only be put in place if at least nine countries take part. It must then be approved by a qualified majority in the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers—where only participating governments get to vote.

However other countries, including Italy, say an enhanced cooperation on patents would fragment the internal market and distort competition. The country

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still hopes for an agreement between all 27 member states by the end of the year. The issue will be discussed at the Competitiveness Council on 10 December.

The Commission has proposed that French, English and German be the working languages of the EU patent—a similar system to the European Patent Office. The EPO offers a single application system, but still files every patent in each of its 38 member states, so an EU-wide patent would make the process faster and cheaper. But several countries, including Italy and Spain, insist that their language should also be included.

Bruno van Pottelsberghe, an economist at the Bruegel think-tank in Brussels, says language is not the actual crux of the dispute. “The real reason is that lobbies of specialised lawyers, advisers and translators have an interest in keeping the system as it is, because an EU patent would mean less business for them,” he told *Research Europe*.

On 30 November, the EPO signed a deal with Google to use its machine translation technology. “If automated translation is good enough but some countries still oppose the proposed language regime, it is proof that language isn’t the real issue,” van Pottelsberghe says.

europe in brief

JRC gets radiation measurement facility

The Joint Research Centre launched its Nuclear Magnetic Resonance facility on 30 November to analyse the chemical and magnetic properties of nuclear and radioactive substances. The facility could help the European Commission develop policy on nuclear-fuel concepts and power reactors.

Six new projects in research infrastructure update

Facilities for wind, solar and nuclear energy research, and for systems biology, microbiology, and the study of ecosystems have been added to EU roadmap for research infrastructure. The European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures working group says the EU needs 50 fresh research infrastructures or major upgrades of existing ones in order to stay at the forefront of research over the next 10 or 20 years.

IMI does not address IP issues

The Innovative Medicines Initiative still fails to address critical issues of intellectual property, says the European research and technology trade association, Earto. The association complains that recent IMI guidance provides no

“reasonable” definition of research use and access rights; foresees no better control of access rights by IP owners, nor more “balanced” conditions for licensing. Earto also wants to lift the 20 per cent cap on indirect costs.

Galileo and GMES to be priorities, say space chiefs

The satellite programme Galileo and the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security earth-monitoring system remain Europe’s top space priorities, say ministers from the European Space Agency and EU member states. The seventh space council in Brussels on 25 November said it was urgent to deploy the Galileo and GMES infrastructure and services, and seek their long-term financing for beyond 2013.

EU and US boost joint security research

The European Commission and the US government have stepped up research collaboration to fight terrorism and other security threats. An ‘implementing arrangement’ reached last month extends an agreement for scientific and technical cooperation signed in July 2009. It will consider both natural and man-made threats, including crisis management, security of critical infrastructures, privacy and biometrics, as well as the development of standards, vulnerability assessments, training and software.

news analysis

Framework moves from research to innovation

The Commission is getting ready to make changes to the Framework Programme—including its name. **Colin Macilwain** reports from Brussels.

The European Commission is preparing to institute changes to the Framework Programme to broaden its reach beyond technology-based industries into services.

In February the Commission will publish, for discussion, draft proposals for the next stage of Framework, which runs from 2014 to 2020. It wants the programme to focus more heavily on outcomes that will lead innovation, officials have said.

European leaders, including Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, appear to want policies that will emphasise innovation across the economy, not just generate research results. Heads of state are due to discuss the new approach at a meeting in February.

“There is tremendous research supported by Framework 7,” Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, commissioner for research, innovation and science, told journalists in Brussels on 25 November. “But that research is being used elsewhere in the world. We need to use it here to create jobs.”

Geoghegan-Quinn said that she would like to exercise influence in areas that are not reliant on hi-tech. “It would be dangerous for us to say that innovation only means high-technology. It has to include the service industries, and traditional manufacturing industries.”

She predicted that at the February meeting “we will get agreement from the heads of state that this area, of research and innovation, is the top priority” for Europe.

The commissioner also criticised “duplication and fragmentation” between existing research programmes. Member states “now realise that fragmentation is not delivering”, she said, calling for the “full implementation of the European Research Area by 2014”. She gave no details of how this deadline would be met.

The top priority of the Irish commissioner, who succeeded Janez Potocnik a year ago, is clearly the Innovation Union, a proposal involving several

Commission directorates, which she released in October [RE 6/10/10, p1]. New arrangements, called innovation partnerships, are central to the proposal. They will try to remove barriers to innovation, such as regulations and trade restrictions, while the research that will enable the innovation is still underway. The pilot innovation partnership, to improve quality of life for the elderly, will start in February, if the Council of Ministers endorses it.

“There’s no doubt that the innova-

tion partnerships will have an impact on the next Framework programme,” said Marian Dewar, a senior aide to Geoghegan-Quinn. “I don’t think it will be called Framework 8,” she added. Geoghegan-Quinn has already criticised the ‘Framework’ name as meaningless to ordinary citizens. “We want to make our instruments much more closely aligned to our political priorities,” Dewar said.

Other officials said that the Research directorate—which from January will be reconstituted as the Research and Innovation directorate—was looking at a more competitive approach to the strategic research element of Framework. This will be modelled on that taken by US federal agencies such as the Department of Energy, which simultaneously backs rival groups taking different approaches to solving the same problem.

Jens Rostrup-Nielson, head of R&D at Haldor Topsoe, a Danish catalyst maker and a member of the European Research Council’s scientific council, criticised current Framework arrangements as static and inefficient.

In one indication of the new emphasis, ERC grant holders are being asked to bid for 150,000-euro grants to draw up plans to exploit their research findings. Rostrup-Nielson said this would cost about 10 million euros next year.

But Martin Oar-Luis, head of the secretariat of the ITRE committee in the European Parliament, which handles research matters, warned that efforts to foster innovation might stretch the resources of the research directorate too far. “My concern is how we define innovation—because innovation is a very broad concept,” he told a meeting of the European Association of Research Managers in Brussels on 22 November. He said that the Innovation Union implicitly raised the question of “whether we are going to finance things like design innovation in the textiles industry through the Framework Programme”.

Waldemar Kütt, another senior aide to Geoghegan-Quinn, sought to play down expectations for the total funding package for the next Framework. “I’d be very hesitant to say that we’ll have a 50 per cent increase—I wouldn’t want to raise expectations,” he said. Kütt added that the research community would have to convince people that there was “added value” in spending the money through Brussels, rather than London or Berlin.

“We have to see how we can integrate innovation into Framework,” Kütt said, adding that a priority would be more involvement of small and medium-sized businesses.

‘I don’t think it will be called Framework Eight.’

euro crisis analysis

Ireland invests

Science could be one of the few strands of government spending to survive the meltdown of Ireland's economy, reports **Laura Hood**.

The collapse of Ireland's banks and subsequent multi-billion-euro bailout by Europe and the International Monetary Fund means a cut in its national budget of 15 billion euros over the next three years. What will happen to the generous investments that have seen Ireland's universities climb the international rankings over the last decade?

Before this week's budget, scientists and academics said they were "cautiously optimistic" about the future.

"This government seems to actually believe its rhetoric about the importance of higher education and research—first for our economic recovery and then our continued development," says Tom Boland, chief executive of the Higher Education Authority. "And that seems to be reflected reasonably in its plans."

The science budget was cut by 4 per cent in 2009-10 but the damage was repaired in July when 2.4bn euros were returned to research via Science Foundation Ireland and Enterprise Ireland as part of a revised capital spending programme.

Further evidence of the Fianna Fáil and Green Party coalition government's belief in science came in last month's National Recovery Plan for 2011-14. This set out how the 15bn euros is to be clawed back. Heavy cuts are anticipated elsewhere but just 2.4m euros will be taken from targeted spending for science, technology and innovation in 2011. Savings in the following two years will be kept to a "minimum amount", the government promised.

The plan identifies the life sciences and ICT as vital areas for growth and pledges to invest "significant funding" in the right R&D areas.

As if to show the government's good intentions, on the day of the bailout, science, technology and innovation minister Conor Lenihan announced a 19m-euro government contribution to the Biomedical Diagnostics Institute as he opened a new BDI research facility at Dublin City University.

Now the government has commissioned a panel of industry and academic experts to come up with a list of between 10 and 20 priority areas for science and

innovation for the next five years. It will identify areas of strength in the Irish research base as well as gaps. Performance and investments will be bench-marked against international averages to tease out the areas that will make the economy the most money from private investment and from university research.

"I do think there is a clear commitment and it's interesting because the government is looking at the Finnish model essentially," says Conor O'Carroll, director of research at the Irish Universities Association. "It is looking at what they did in the 1990s when they were in dire circumstances. They would say they researched their way out of recession to some extent. There is no doubt that that model has been followed."

The outlook for universities is less rosy. The recovery plan already indicates that universities will need to take a five per cent hit to their non-pay grants and worse could be to come in the 2011 budget. The government's hands are tied to an extent by the Croke Park Agreement. This deal, struck with unions at the end of March, is intended to prevent it from cutting public sector pay or from making compulsory redundancies. A pro-rata cut could leave higher education up to 30 per cent worse off over the next three years with fewer options as to how to make those savings.

UNIVERSITIES HAD EXPECTED a plan for their future in the form of a higher education strategy drawn up by a government-appointed panel led by economist Colin Hunt. This group started work in February 2009 and has put together its final report. But its findings have still not been made public.

Boland says he expects the plan to be approved and published by the end of the year.

The report is thought to recommend the introduction of student fees and the potential for such a decision is strongly implied in the recovery programme. In the document, the 1,500-euro 'service charge' paid at the beginning of the year by Ireland's students is hiked up to 2,000 euros and renamed a 'student contribution.'

But the coalition may not get the opportunity to put these plans into action if its popularity continues to nose-dive ahead of next year's general election.

A rejection of the government on polling day could result in a parliamentary majority for either Labour or Fine Gael. Neither has a clear stance on science or universities but Boland and others add that they appear likely to keep up the support for science. Even without their explicit say so, the community appears to be resigned to fees as the preferred option of any government.

More to say? Email comment@ResearchResearch.com

'The government seems to actually believe its rhetoric about higher education and research.'

The murder of Italy's universities

Italy's universities are in a mess. A wave of protest of a kind not seen since the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s is shaking formerly peaceful academic institutions. A large number of researchers have stopped teaching. Many faculties are closed, with teachers and researchers joining students to occupy the roofs of academic buildings. Every day, large demonstrations surge through Italian towns and last month an egg-throwing demonstration forced open the doors of the Senate in Rome.

The first reason for this mobilisation is the government's decision to cut funding for universities, along with research centres and the rest of education. The original government plan was to cut 1.3 billion euros from the ordinary funding of universities and 8bn euros from education, giving universities in 2011 less funding than in 2001.

Now, following the protests, it seems the cut will be "only" 500 million euros, but everyone—except the minister of education, university and research, Mariastella Gelmini—is perfectly aware that this means that from 2011 universities will not be able to cover their ordinary expenses; some won't even be able to pay the salaries of teachers and staff. Consequently, universities will be forced to raise tuition fees, reduce the quantity and quality of teaching, cancel research projects, and dismiss at least half of their short-term staff.

The second reason for the protests is the Gelmini reforms, now going through parliament. Their main feature is the privatisation of public higher education. The bill is actually a counter-reform, with three main elements:

First, new governance, which increases the power of rectors, includes private members within the governing board, eliminates the role of the academic senate elected by professors, staff and students. Most teachers think

this would lead to an intolerable reduction of democracy and autonomy of an institution, threatening academic freedom and offering a model more suited to a company than a university.

Second, a complete change to the welfare and rights of students. Grants will be replaced with loans that must be repaid after gaining a degree. Young people will begin their working life repaying the government for the money they get during their studies. Moreover, the government takes responsibility for university rules and regulations—a

blank cheque, without any obligation, so it will be able to decide what it wishes.

Worst of all, the law's third aim is to change the rules of access, and the roles of teachers and researchers. Today there are three positions of permanent teachers and researchers. In ascending order they are: *ricercatori*, *professori associati*, and *professori ordinari*. *Ricercatori* should not teach but only do research work. In fact *ricercatori* do much of the teaching. Winning a public competition is the only way to move up, to *professore associato* and to *professore ordinario*.

The law would eliminate the old position of *ricercatore*. Those now in post would be unable to move, so the careers of 25,000 researchers will be frozen without prospect of promotion. In addition, access to a permanent teaching post will only be possible through a new six-year *ricercatore* contract, at the end of which there will be two possibilities. One, dependent on a positive evaluation, is to become directly a *professore associato*. The other is to leave the university and find another job. As the universities don't even have the money to pay their running costs, it is unlikely they will hire the young researchers as more expensive *associati* after six years. It means that many 30 to 36-year-olds will have to abandon what they have been studying for. The new six-year *ricercatore* posts would conflict with the old *ricercatori*, who are denied any chance of career.

The law doesn't mention another 20,000 young people working full-time as teachers and researchers on temporary contracts. They are underpaid, have no maternity, holiday or other rights, and are waiting their turn to win a public competition. Nor does the law offer them any future. As a consequence of the recent cuts, about half of them will be dismissed in 2011, the rest seem condemned to remain in this precarious condition for decades.

There is no money for new researchers, recruitment is frozen, and in the next six years half of the professors will retire. Researchers are angry. So are temporary researchers, students, professors and the university unions. There is a widespread feeling that the funding cuts and the new rules together mean the death of the Italian public university. Or perhaps we should call it a murder.

During the next few days, parliament will vote to decide the destiny of Italy's higher education institutions. Those who really care about public universities are united in the hope that the bill will be rejected or withdrawn.

More to say? Email comment@ResearchResearch.com

Marco Broccati is in the Department of Public Sectors at the Italian national union confederation CGIL.

'Those now in post would be unable to move, so the careers of 25,000 researchers will be frozen without prospect of promotion.'

highlights

Issue no. 311

EU justice and home affairs evaluation

The Directorate-General for Justice and the Directorate-General for Home Affairs invite proposals for evaluation-related services on justice and home affairs. Funding is worth 26 million euros [item 9].

EU-Canada transatlantic exchange partnerships

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency invites applications for its transatlantic exchange partnerships. Funding is worth 1.546 million euros [item 14].

Diabetes grants and fellowships

The European Foundation for the Study of Diabetes invites applications several awards. A total of 3.7 million euros is available [items 26, 27 and 29].

Luxembourg postdoctoral grants

National Research Fund Luxembourg invites applications for its AFR postdoctoral grants, worth up to 56,324 euros per year [item 30].

Innovation research incentives

The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research invites applications for its innovation research incentives scheme vici awards, worth 1.5 million euros [item 31].

deadlines

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europa

Human genetics awards

The European Society of Human Genetics invites applications for the following awards:

- awards for presentations at the ESHG conference, including: young investigator awards for outstanding science; Isabelle Oberlé award for research on genetics of mental retardation; Lodewijk Sandkuijl award for the best talk in statistical genetics; ESHG poster awards. Each prize is worth 300 euros. Web id: 1161235.

- conference fellowships. These enable applicants from Central and Eastern Europe to present their work at the ESHG conference. Web id: 1161236.

Contact: ESHG 2011 c/o Vienna Medical Academy, Alser Strasse 4, A-1090 Vienna, Austria. Tel +43 405 13 83 22. Email mv@medacad.org. Web https://www.eshg.org/abstracts0.0.html

Deadline: 18 February 2011 [1]

Orthopaedic surgery

The International Society of Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology invites applications for its SICOT-SIROT awards. These aim to help candidates attend the triennial world congress and are awarded to the authors of original research work in orthopaedics or traumatology completed within three years prior to the congress. Awards are worth \$2,000 (1,500 euros) each. Web id: 1161103.

Contact: SICOT aisbl, Rue Washington 40-b.9, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium. Email awards@sicot.org. Web http://tinyurl.com/356yx7t

Deadline: 31 December 2010 [3]

Environmental science

The Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry invites applications for the following awards:

- return to science fellowship. This enables scientists and engineers in the field of environmental sciences to return to a career in science after a professional break of one year or more due to either family commitments or a period of illness. The fellowship is worth 4,000 euros. Web id: 1161138.

- best publication awards. These are awarded at the annual meeting to scientists or students under the age of 35 for the best publication in environmental sciences. Three awards are available: the AstraZeneca award for the best publication in risk assessment, modelling and theoretical studies; the Eurofins award for the best publication in chemical analysis and environmental modelling; the RifCon award for the best publication in ecotoxicology, eco-epidemiology and biological and biochemical studies. Award recipients will receive free registration to the annual meeting and up to 800 euros in travel costs. Web id: 1161140.

Contact: SETAC Europe, Av. de la Toison d'Or 67 b 6, B-1060 Brussels, Belgium. Tel +32 2 772 72 81. Email barbara.koelman@setac.org. Web http://www.setac.org/node/469

Deadline: 31 December 2010 [4]

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Ceramic research awards

The European Ceramic Society invites applications for funding through the Journal of the European Ceramic Society trust fund. Grants support: events aimed at young researchers and students; funding visits by individuals to other laboratories within Europe. Funding is worth up to 50 per cent of total costs. Web id: 1161228.

Contact: ECerS, c/o Belgian Ceramic Research Centre, Avenue Gouverneur Cornez 4, 7000 Mons, Belgium. Tel +32 65 40 34 21. Web <http://tinyurl.com/37edsxz>
Deadline: 31 December 2010 [6]

EU youth and democracy

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency invites proposals for a study on youth participation in democratic life. The tenderer will conduct a study to analyse the current situation of youth participation Europe, to explore initiatives to promote youth participation and to provide conclusions on how young people's participation in democratic life in Europe can be further enhanced. Funding is available for up to 14 months. OJ 2010/S 227-346257. CPV: 75130000. Web id: 1161404.

Contact: EACEA, Avenue du Bourget 1, 1140 Brussels, Belgium. Email eacea-tenders@ec.europa.eu. Web <http://tinyurl.com/354d6um>
Deadline: 3 January 2011 [7]

EU pyrotechnic risks

The Directorate-General for Home Affairs invites proposals for a study on the security risks related to the handling of large amounts of pyrotechnic articles and on ways to mitigate these risks. Funding is worth up to 150,000 euros over 10 months. HOME/2010/ISEC/PR/039-A1. Web id: 1158769.

Contact: European Commission, Unit A4, Financial Support, LX 46 6/020, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium. Email HOME-A4-Procurement@ec.europa.eu. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3xb7vr4>
Deadline: 4pm, 5 January 2011 [8]

EU justice and home affairs

The Directorate-General for Justice and the Directorate-General for Home Affairs invite proposals for a multiple framework contract on evaluation and evaluation-related services in the area of justice and home affairs. Tenders may be submitted for one of the following lots: supply of impact assessment, evaluation and evaluation-related services in the area of justice, fundamental rights and citizenship, worth up to 16 million euros; supply of impact assessment, evaluation and evaluation-related services in the area of home affairs, worth up to 10m euros. Funding is available for up to 48 months. The total budget is 26m euros. OJ 2010/S 231-352482. CPV: 73200000. Web id: 1161403.

Contact: Web <http://tinyurl.com/2ulwkcu>
Deadline: 12 January 2011 [9]

EU transport knowledge

The Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport invites proposals for the continuation of the transport research knowledge centre. The tenderer will continue and expand the TRKC portal, and will expand it further to transport research actions conducted by non-European

countries and international organisations. Funding is available for up to 36 months. OJ 2010/S 233-355760. CPV: 73000000, 72400000, 72000000. Web id: 1161415.

Contact: European Commission, DG Mobility and Transport, Rue Demot 28, 1049 Brussels, Belgium. Email damaio.chaves@ec.europa.eu. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3xh45wm>
Deadline: 4pm, 21 January 2011 [10]

Oncology nursing award

The European Oncology Nursing Society invites nominations for its distinguished merit award. This recognises an outstanding contribution to the advancement of the art and science of cancer nursing within Europe. The winner will receive free registration to the 2011 European multidisciplinary cancer congress in Stockholm and EONS will cover travel and accommodation for four nights. Web id: 177774.

Contact: European Oncology Nursing Society, Avenue E Mounier 83, B-1200 Brussels, Belgium. Tel +32 2 7799 923. Email eons.secretariat@oncurnurse.eu. Web <http://tinyurl.com/33yq5fu>
Deadline: 31 January 2011 [11]

Orthopaedic surgery

The International Society of Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology invites applications for the following awards:

- the Marcela Uribe Zamudio awards. These support young researchers and clinicians and are worth \$2,000 (1,500 euros) each. Web id: 1161102.
- Korean SICOT award. The award enables orthopaedic surgeons under the age of 40 to attend the triennial world congress and is worth \$3,000. Web id: 1161105.

Contact: SICOT aisbl, Rue Washington, 40 - b.9, BE-1050 Brussels, Belgium. Email awards@sicot.org. Web <http://tinyurl.com/356yx7t>
Deadline: 28 February 2011 [12]

EU Canada exchange funds

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency invites applications for transatlantic exchange partnerships under its EU-Canada programme for cooperation in higher education, training and youth. Funding supports joint study or training programmes allowing transatlantic exchanges between European and Canadian education institutions, and the development and implementation of dual or joint degree programmes. The budget for this call is 1.546 million euros and each project may request up to 428,000 euros over four years. OJ 2010/C 323/08. EACEA/37/10. Web id: 213380.

Contact: EACEA, EU-Canada call 2011, Avenue du Bourget 1, BOUR 02/17, 1140 Brussels, Belgium. Web <http://tinyurl.com/32a2hwh>
Deadline: 31 March 2011 [14]

EU culture grants

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency is inviting proposals for the following:

- cooperation projects between organisations involved in cultural policy analysis. Funding is worth up to 120,000 euros per year. Web id: 186342.
- multi-annual cooperation projects. These provide between 200,000 euros and

500,000 euros per year. Web id: 254926.

• cooperation projects. These enhance the cultural area shared by Europeans through the development of activities among cultural operators from eligible countries. Projects may request between 50,000 euros and 200,000 euros. Web id: 1159789.

Contact: Email EACEA-P5-CULTURALPOLICYANALYSIS@ec.europa.eu. Web <http://tinyurl.com/ydyepjr>
Deadline: 12pm, 1 October 2011 [15]

ESF Nanobiophotonics visits

The European Science Foundation invites applications for its new approaches to biochemical sensing with plasmonic nanobiophotonics short visits and exchange grants. Short visit grants last for up to 15 days and are reimbursed on a per diem basis of 85 euros plus actual travel expenses up to a maximum of 500 euros. Exchange grants last from 15 days to six months and are reimbursed on the basis of an allowance of 400 euros per week plus actual travel expenses worth a maximum of 500 euros. Web id: 1161380.

Contact: Email <http://tinyurl.com/2v2sms2>
No deadline [18]

Cardiovascular exchanges

The European Society of Cardiology invites applications for its first contact initiative grants. These facilitate exchanges between young scientists currently working or studying in European institutions and hosting laboratories in foreign countries within or outside Europe. Up to 10 grants of 2,500 euros each are available. Web id: 1161384.

Contact: ESC, The European Heart House, Councils Relations, 2035 Route des Colles, Les Templiers, B.P. 179, 06903 Sophia Antipolis, France. Email councils@escardio.org. Web <http://tinyurl.com/358nq8a>
Deadline: 4 January 2011 [19]

Cardiology awards

The European Society of Cardiology invites applications for the following grants:

• interventional cardiology research grants. These support specialised research or further research training for ESC member country citizens or permanent residents in a regular member country outside their own, and are worth up to 25,000 euros. Web id: 201255.

• interventional cardiology training grants. These support high quality training in another ESC member country for medical graduates having completed the major part of their cardiology training, but who have not yet obtained a consultant or equivalent permanent position, and are worth up to 25,000 euros. Web id: 259095.

Contact: EAPCI c/o ESC Office for Associations, European Heart House, 2035 Route des Colles, Les Templiers, BP 179, 06903 Sophia Antipolis, France. Tel +33 4 92 94 70 00. Email EAPCI@escardio.org. Web <http://tinyurl.com/yhpx6of>
Deadline: 15 January 2011 [20]

Evolutionary biology prize

The European Society for Evolutionary Biology invites nominations for the John Maynard Smith prize. This prize is awarded to young researchers working in the field of evolutionary biology and includes

registration, accommodation and travel expenses to attend the congress. Web id: 209991.

Contact: Email otto@zoology.ubc.ca. Web <http://www.eseb.org/>
Deadline: 15 January 2011 [22]

ESF science meetings

The European Science Foundation invites proposals for funding from potential organisers of science meetings, including workshops, schools, and conferences. Eligible topics include: functional genomics technologies; biomedicine; bioinformatics; systems biology; environmental functional genomics; biotechnology; biobanking; impact on society. Web id: 260412.

Contact: Email <http://tinyurl.com/33bhfk>
Deadline: 5pm CET, 15 March 2011 [23]

Allergopharma award

The European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology Organisation invites applications for the Allergopharma award. This recognises scientific achievement on the part of younger EAACI members and encourages further research. The award is worth 10,000 euros. Web id: 260912.

Contact: Allergopharma Joachim Ganzner KG, 21462 Reinbek, Germany. Tel +49 40 72765 185. Email oliver.cromwell@allergopharma.de. Web <http://tinyurl.com/39meote>
Deadline: 31 December 2010 [23.1]

Diabetes collaboration

The European Foundation for the Study of Diabetes invites applications for its new horizons collaborative funding initiative. This supports collaborative research projects in basic or clinical research relating to diabetes. Basic research projects may receive up to 100,000 euros. Clinical research projects may receive up to 330,000 euros over three years. Web id: 1161290.

Contact: EFSD, Rheindorfer Weg 3, 40591 Düsseldorf, Germany. Tel +49 211 75 84 69 0. Email Foundation@easf.org. Web <http://tinyurl.com/32qya47>
Deadline: 25 January 2011 [24]

Clinical chemotherapy

The International Society of Chemotherapy invites applications for the Masaaki Ohkoshi award. This recognises the best clinical study on the subject of urinary tract infection published in 2009 or 2010. The award is worth \$1,500 (1,130 euros) and will be presented at the ICC/ECCIMD conference. Web id: 1160982.

Contact: ICS, c/o Karl-Bickleder-Strasse 44c, 94315 Straubing, Germany. Email kurt@nabers.de. Web <http://tinyurl.com/39rh7xa>
Deadline: 31 January 2011 [25]

Diabetes research

The European Foundation for the Study of Diabetes invites applications for its partnership for diabetes research in Europe grants. Grants are worth up to 100,000 euros for basic research projects and up to 400,000 euros for clinical research projects. The budget for this call is 3 million euros for the period 2011-13. Web id: 1157979.

Contact: EFSD, Rheindorfer Weg 3, 40591 Düsseldorf, Germany. Tel +49 211 75 84 69 0. Email Foundation@easf.org. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3ab8jnk>
Deadline: 10 February 2011 [26]

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Diabetes research

The European Foundation for the Study of Diabetes invites applications for the EFSD/Lilly research fellowships. Four fellowships, worth 50,000 euros each, are available. Web id: 260001.

Contact: EFSD, Rheindorfer Weg 3, 40591 Düsseldorf, Germany. Tel +49 211 75 84 69 0. Email Foundation@easd.org. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2enl99v>

Deadline: 15 February 2011 [27]

Type 2 diabetes

The European Foundation for the Study of Diabetes invites applications for its programme for the study of the role of the kidney in diabetes, in partnership with Janssen. Grants are worth up to 100,000 euros for basic research projects and up to 200,000 euros for clinical research projects. A total of 500,000 euros is available. Web id: 1161387.

Contact: EFSD, Rheindorfer Weg 3, 40591 Düsseldorf, Germany. Tel +49 211 75 84 69 0. Email Foundation@easd.org. Web <http://tinyurl.com/yjchzz>

Deadline: 25 February 2011 [29]

Postdoctoral grants

National Research Fund Luxembourg is inviting applications for its AFR postdoctoral grants. The programme has no thematic limitations. Where an applicant has a work contract, the maximum funding will be 51,618 euros per year, with a supplement of 4,706 euros per year in the case of a public-private partnership. Applicants without work contracts will receive a maximum of 25,200 euros per year and a supplement of 1,800 euros per year in the case of a public-private partnership. Web id: 1159906.

Contact: 6, rue Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, BP 1777, L-1017, Luxembourg, Luxembourg. Tel +352 26 19 25 1. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2a77rtw>

Deadline: 22 February 2011 [30]

Senior researcher incentives

The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research invites applications for its innovation research incentives scheme *vici* awards. These are for senior researchers who have developed their own innovative lines of research and acted as coaches for young researchers. Each grant is worth up to 1.5 million euros over a five year period. Web id: 260546.

Contact: NWO, PO Box 93138, 2509 AC Den Haag, Netherlands. Tel +31 70 344 0940. Email vi@nwo.nl. Web <http://tinyurl.com/yzcsmkt>

Deadline: 31 March 2011 [31]

Cancer postdoctoral award

The Spanish National Cancer Centre invites application for its CNIO-Caja Navarra international postdoctoral programme. Grants enable individuals to carry out their postdoctoral training within CNIO's research programmes. Funding worth up to 34,200 euros is available annually for up to two years. Web id: 207215.

Contact: Email postdoc@cnio.es. Web <http://tinyurl.com/32rhwyj>

Deadline: 31 December 2010 [34]

3R animal research grants

The 3R Research Foundation invites applications for its grants to reduce animal experiments in research. Grants provide between CHF50,000 (38,000 euros) and

CHF250,000. The budget for this call is CHF500,000 in 2011. Web id: 211761.

Contact: 3R Research Foundation, Dorfplatz 5, P.O. 1372, CH-3110 Münsingen, Switzerland. Tel +41 31 722 08 30. Email research.3R@bluewin.ch. Web <http://tinyurl.com/ybjjvto>

Deadline: 1 February 2011 [41]

Medicine prize

The Louis-Jeantet Foundation for Medicine invites nominations for its 2010 prize for medicine. This prize is awarded to fully active biomedical researchers. Each prize consists of CHF700,000 (537,000 euros), with CHF600,000 to cover the winner's future research, and CHF100,000 for personal use. Web id: 189760.

Contact: Louis-Jeantet Foundation for Medicine, Chemin Rieu 17, PO Box 270, CH-1211 Geneva 17, Switzerland. Tel +41 22 704 36 36. Email rossier@jeantet.ch. Web <http://www.jeantet.ch/e/prize/prize.php>

Deadline: 15 February 2011 [42]

Life sciences training

Ecoles Polytechniques Fédérale de Lausanne invites applications for its international summer research programme. This offers an intensive research training opportunity to undergraduate students interested in a career in the life sciences. Financial compensation of CHF3,200 (2,500 euros), plus some funding for excursions and social events, is provided. Web id: 1161292.

Contact: Tel +41 21 693 07 94. Email alice.goodman@epfl.ch. Web <http://sv.epfl.ch/summer-research>

Deadline: 15 February 2011 [43]

Cern associateships

Cern, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, invites applications for the following:

- corresponding associates programme for established scientists holding teaching or research posts at institutions. AFC-2011-1/CASS. Web id: 259704.

- scientific associates programme. AFC-2011-1/PDAS. Web id: 251966.

Contact: Email recruitment.service@cern.ch. Web <http://tinyurl.com/36u9btt>

Deadline: 11 March 2011 [44]

Chemotherapy awards

The International Society of Chemotherapy invites applications for its young investigator travel awards. These provide airfare, accommodation and registration costs for researchers under 35 years of age, wishing to present their work at the ECCMID/ICC conference. Web id: 1160973.

Contact: ISC, c/o Medical Microbiology, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Foresterhill, Aberdeen AB25 2ZN, UK. Email i.m.gould@abdn.ac.uk. Web <http://tinyurl.com/39rh7xa>

Deadline: 31 December 2010 [46]

History prize

The Institute of Historical Research invites nominations for the Charles Schmitt prize. This prize will be awarded to the best paper on any area of intellectual history. The prize is worth £500 (590 euros). Web id: 1161402.

Contact: Email stephen.gaukroger@arts.usyd.edu.au. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2bu75df>

Deadline: 31 December 2010 [47]

Wellcome programme grants

The Wellcome Trust invites applications for its programme grants in medical history and humanities. These provide support for extensive or long-term research to encourage flexibility. Grants normally last for five years, and cover the salaries and associated costs for research assistants; travel; equipment; and attendance at conferences and seminars. Web id: 1159463.

Contact: Grants Management - Medical History and Humanities, Wellcome Trust, Gibbs Building, 215 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE, UK. Tel +44 20 7611 8429. Email mhh@wellcome.ac.uk. Web <http://tinyurl.com/33jyc3w>

Deadline: 1 January 2011 [48]

Cancer research bursaries

Cancer Research UK invites applications for its research bursaries for clinicians and professions allied to medicine. Funding is worth £25,000 (29,500 euros). Web id: 213544.

Contact: CRUK, 1 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3PX, UK. Tel +44 20 7438 5334. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3y9gmk2>

Deadline: 11 January 2011 [49]

Humanities fellowship

The Institute of Historical Research invites applications for the Mellon fellowships for pre-dissertation and dissertation research in the humanities. The purpose of the fellowship programme is to help doctoral candidates in the humanities to work with original source materials in the United Kingdom. Web id: 260002.

Contact: IHR Mellon Fellowships in the Humanities, University of London, Senate House, London WC1E 7HU, UK. Tel +44 20 7862 8747. Email james.lees@sas.ac.uk. Web <http://www.history.ac.uk/fellowships/junior>

Deadline: 14 January 2011 [50]

Cancer prizes

Cancer Research UK invites nominations for the following prizes:

- lifetime achievement in cancer research prize, worth £25,000 (29,500 euros). Web id: 1158597.

- translational cancer research prize, worth £25,000. Web id: 1158599.

- future leaders in cancer research prize, worth £10,000. Web id: 1158600.

Contact: CRUK, Angel Building, 407 St John Street, London EC1V 4AD, UK. Tel +44 207 438 5342. Email prizes@cancer.org.uk. Web <http://tinyurl.com/35l7fhv>

Deadline: 5pm, 14 January 2011 [51]

rest of world

Biomechanics awards

The International Society of Biomechanics invites applications for the following awards:

- young investigator awards, worth US\$750 (560 euros). Web id: 1161280.

- clinical biomechanics award, worth US\$1,250. Web id: 1161281.

Contact: University of Queensland, School of Human Movement Studies, Brisbane, 4072, QLD, Australia. Tel +61 7 33468771. Email a.cresswell@uq.edu.au. Web <http://tinyurl.com/25olbd7>

Deadline: 20 January 2011 [59]

tenders

Formation flying ESA*

The European Space Agency has issued a call for tenders for a study on a wireless integrated communications and navigation system for formation flying missions. The activity should explore existing standards and technologies from the terrestrial wireless techniques, and define the adaptation to the formation flying space missions. Funding is worth between 200,000 euros and 500,000 euros. Ref. 09.1ET.07. Web id: 1161435. Deadline: 20 January 2011.

EO products ESA*

The European Space Agency has issued a call for tenders for the development of innovative EO products for operational international agencies. This aims to create an opportunity for the EO service industry to demonstrate pre-operational capabilities with respect to relatively short term prospects for future operational delivery. Funding is worth between 200,000 euros and 500,000 euros. Ref. 10.187.08. Web id: 1161433. Deadline: 28 January 2011.

Network protocols ESA*

The European Space Agency has issued a call for tenders for a study on network discovery protocols. The activity includes the definition, implementation and test of the network discovery protocol and plug and play techniques over a SpaceWire network. Funding is worth between 100,000 euros and 200,000 euros. Ref. 10.1ED.04. Web id: 1161436. Deadline: 28 January 2011.

Battleship chamber ESA*

The European Space Agency has issued a call for tenders for a study on a battleship chamber for unsteady combustion process analysis. This aims to study the feasibility, designing, manufacturing and operating of a simplified test rig, in the form of a battleship combustion chamber, to provide relevant test cases for the tuning of the predictive models. Funding is worth between 200,000 euros and 500,000 euros. Ref. 10.123.04. Web id: 1161432. Deadline: 31 January 2011.

Passenger monitoring ESA*

The European Space Agency has issued a call for tenders for the creation of a satellite wireless access point on launcher for monitoring of the passenger. The objective is to define, design, manufacture and test a breadboard for this purpose. Funding is worth between 200,000 euros and 500,000 euros. A relevant participation of non-prime contractors, including SMEs, is required. Ref. 09.153.19. Web id: 1161431. Deadline: 3 February 2011.

Low noise amplifier ESA*

The European Space Agency has issued a call for tenders for a study on a dual redundant low noise amplifier for Q/V band applications. The activity aims at developing the redundant LNA at EM level using European or Canadian low-noise processes. Funding is worth between 200,000 euros and 500,000 euros. Ref. 10.1TT.21. Web id: 1161434. Deadline: 4 February 2011.

*ESA is at: <http://emits.esa.int>

usa

National Blood Foundation scientific research grants programme

208826. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3aho72k>

American Association of Cereal Chemists Foundation Alsberg-French-Schoch memorial lectureship award

193313. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3xaq246>

American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Paula Backscheider archival fellowship

209413. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3y4vjst>

American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Theodore ED Braun research travel fellowship

209411. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3y4vjst>

American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Richard H Popkin research travel fellowship

209407. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3y4vjst>

American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Robert R Palmer research travel fellowship

209404. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3y4vjst>

Educational Testing Service postdoctoral fellowship award programme

190867. Web <http://tinyurl.com/37bkg9y>

Electrochemical Society summer fellowships

187101. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2dydhlq>

Cooper Ornithological Society Joseph Grinnell student research award

211789. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2d49cxb>

American Association of Cereal Chemists Foundation Bruce Wasserman young investigator award

209994. Web <http://tinyurl.com/27cgwvf>

American Society of Parasitologists eminent parasitologist lecture

1161293. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3yrsrqt>

American Society of Parasitologists Henry Baldwin Ward medal award

1161294. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3y2zklc>

American Society of Parasitologists Ashton Cuckler new investigator award

1161295. Web <http://tinyurl.com/259mlpv>

American Society of Parasitologists Clark P Read mentor award

1161296. Web <http://tinyurl.com/34q7qej>

Alzheimer's Association Zenith Fellows award

208326. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2b5su7w>

Alzheimer's Association investigator initiated research grants

208315. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2b5su7w>

John Carter Brown Library fellowships

151172. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2c7rr44>

Association of Field Ornithologists Pamela and Alexander F Skutch research award

197085. Web <http://tinyurl.com/39vhmkl>

European Society for Organ Transplantation/American Society of Transplant Surgeons exchange grant

213236. Web <http://tinyurl.com/33jhsnm>

University of Louisville Grawemeyer award for ideas improving world order

207160. Web <http://tinyurl.com/37jptxw>

American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Foundation Bernstein grant

194832. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2fudr2q>

American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Foundation investigator development grant

194830. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2fyf7pz>

American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Foundation resident research grant

194828. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2fyq5s6>

Smithsonian Institution National Air and Space Museum Charles A Lindbergh chair in aerospace history

197297. Web <http://tinyurl.com/38qf6k5>

Smithsonian Institution Guggenheim fellowship

197292. Web <http://tinyurl.com/364fw2l>

Smithsonian Institution molecular evolution fellowships

197013. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3xx5l5h>

American Political Science Association book awards

208505. Web <http://tinyurl.com/33lsf85>

American Society of Parasitologists Willis A Reid Jr student research fund

201820. Web <http://tinyurl.com/36fvce2>

Cooper Ornithological Society Mewaldt-King student research award

189669. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2d49cxb>

Global Health Council Jonathan Mann award for global health and human rights

1161411. Web <http://tinyurl.com/33fex97>

International Reading Association Steven A Stahl research grant

208292. Web <http://tinyurl.com/35ptucb>

International Reading Association Nila Banton Smith research dissemination support grant

255127. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2u89z4s>

American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists innovation in biotechnology awards

260168. Web <http://tinyurl.com/dbaeen>

Research Society on Alcoholism young investigator award

199433. Web <http://tinyurl.com/22rxn3>

Research Society on Alcoholism distinguished researcher award

199429. Web <http://tinyurl.com/22rxn3>

Association of Genetic Technologists outstanding achievement award

200187. Web <http://tinyurl.com/35d2e77>

American Society of Mechanical Engineers prime movers committee award

199139. Web <http://tinyurl.com/2vubjal>

American Society of Mechanical Engineers Blackall machine tool and gage award

199130. Web <http://tinyurl.com/3ycfmhm>

American Society of Mechanical Engineers Henry R Worthington medal

199126. Web <http://tinyurl.com/26d3kvy>

American Society of Mechanical Engineers George Westinghouse medals

199121. Web <http://tinyurl.com/326aww7>

policy diary

December

16 European Medicines Agency Management Board Meeting, London. <http://tinyurl.com/28vhoya>

24 International Winter Meeting on Nuclear Physics, Bormio, Italy. To 28. <http://cdsweb.cern.ch/record/1287884>

26 EUREKA Academy - A European Approach to Venture Capital Funding, Brussels, Belgium. <http://tinyurl.com/2f4mwbt>

28 How to Foster Competitiveness for European R&D, Saint-Paul de Vence, France. To 29. <http://tinyurl.com/2eyl7hv>

January

1 Policies in Support of High-Growth Innovative SMEs, Brussels Belgium. <http://tinyurl.com/26mf5ej>

10 TECHINNOV Conference, Paris, France. <http://www.techinnov-only.com/UK/index.html>

• The Competitiveness of the European Chemicals Industry, Brussels, Belgium. <http://tinyurl.com/34s4mou>

21 2011 Faculty for European Compliance Programme for Chemistry, Biotech and Medical Businesses, Paris, France. To 25. <http://law.shu.edu/Paris>

March

23 Global Anima Health Conference, London, UK. To 24. <http://tinyurl.com/25hwodm>

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Germany boosts 2010 science budget with 800m-euro top-up

The German government is to increase its 2011 science budget by 800 million euros, the research ministry announced on 25 November.

The funding will bring the total 2011 science budget to 11.5 billion euros, a 7.2 per cent increase compared with 2010. The increased funding is part of the German government's strategy to boost science and innovation and to nurture competitiveness and entrepreneurship.

The money will be used in various areas of science and education. In 2011, Germany's public research organisations can expect more than 4bn euros in total funding, according to the research ministry. Another 1.2bn euros will be used for the country's hi-tech strategy, which funds research in climate change, communication, health and mobility. A sum of 314m euros will be reserved for research in the former East German federal states, which are still trying to catch up with the science conducted by their West German counterparts.

Around 160m euros will be used to improve the BAföG funding system for students from poorer backgrounds. More than 600m euros will be used to create new places at universities, as Germany is expecting a double cohort of students next year after secondary education was

by Inga Vesper

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reduced from nine to eight years in many federal states.

The rest of the 2011 science budget will be used to fund other research programmes including innovation, clusters and excellence.

The funding increase for science is part of the government's pledge to spend an additional 12bn euros on research and education during this legislative period, which ends in 2013. The funding was ringfenced from government cuts following the financial crisis, after the German parliament agreed that science and innovation were crucial to the country's recovery. Education funding from this pot is governed by the Higher Education Pact, set up in 2005 to coordinate long-term funding for universities.

"The quality of the German research and innovation system is a vital factor for our international competitiveness," said Annette Schavan, the German research minister. "The government and the federal states have worked together on the Higher Education Pact to make sure that the universities can rely on secure, continuous funding."

nations in brief

NRW gives extra funds to applied sciences universities

North Rhine-Westphalia is to spend a further 2 million euros

on research at universities of applied sciences this year, the NRW innovation ministry has announced. The funding will be used to buy research equipment for 17 local applied-sciences universities, according to Svenja Schulze, the federal state's research minister.

Spain loans 122m euros to industry R&D projects

Spain's ministry of science plans to lend more than 122 million euros to 228 R&D projects carried out by industry as part of its Neotec scheme. They include 31 projects carried out by business consortia, and 16 projects to set up and consolidate technology-based businesses. The loans, partly refundable at 0 per cent interest for up to 10 years, can provide up to 75 per cent of a project's overall budget.

Spain starts national Antarctic research campaign

Spain has started its 10-million-euro Antarctic research campaign, delayed after the country's research station had to undergo extra refurbishments. The Spanish research ministry says it will fund 16 research projects in Antarctica with around 3.7m euros and spend an additional 5.3m euros over the next two years on equipment.

Pécresse promises support for stem-cell research

French research minister Valérie Pécresse has promised scientists the support of the state in the debate on embryonic stem-cell research. During a visit to a stem-cell laboratory on 25 November, she said that research in the field must continue when the 2004 bioethics law is rewritten in February. The socialist opposition has criticised the government for its approach to funding such research as the exception rather than the rule.

Parity lacking at highest levels of CNRS

Women are still underrepresented among the most senior members of France's flagship research organisation, according to the CNRS 2008-09 parity report. Across the CNRS there are two men for every woman, but this increases among research directors to three men for every woman. There are 10 men for every woman working as a DRCE, or 'exceptional class research director', says the report.

First graduates at German-Jordanian university

The first 130 students have finished their bachelor degrees at the German-Jordanian University in Amman. The university was set up to increase German academic collaboration with the Middle East. The students spent a year at a German academic institution or business as part of the university's sandwich degree system.

nordic

University of Copenhagen to repay part of brain research grant

The University of Copenhagen is to repay part of a 5.6 million kroner grant awarded to one of its researchers after the funder discovered that some of the money had been spent on expenses outside the remit of the grant.

The university told *Research Europe* on 3 December that it would repay an undisclosed amount of the grant to the private foundation IMK Almene Fond. The grant had been won in 2005 by Milena Penkowa, a neuroscientist at the university. The university says the researcher is currently suspended from the university for reasons unrelated to the IMK grant controversy.

Penkowa has been leading a four-year study into diseases of the brain. The study ended earlier this year. But when the university submitted its final financial report to the foundation, the latter refused to accept it.

In a telephone interview, Erhardt Gram, chairman of the foundation, confirmed that there were problems with the financial report. "Yes, there is a dialogue with the university regarding expenses unrelated to the research the grant was given for," he said last week.

According to Danish media reports, Penkowa was suspected of having spent part of the grant on expenses not connected to the research project. Her legal team, how-

by Pia Pedersen

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ever, dispute the claims. In an email to *Research Europe* her lawyer, Peter Skau-Andersen, said the media's allegations were "biased and incorrect".

The story has received fervent media attention in Denmark, where Penkowa is a rising star. In 2009, the 37-year-old was heralded as a "comet within Danish health science" by Helge Sander, the then-science minister. This was when Penkowa became the first woman to win the EliteForsk prize, the science ministry's top accolade for young scientists.

Penkowa has twice before been involved in controversy over her research but emerged on both occasions with her reputation intact. In 2002, her doctoral dissertation was rejected by a review panel at the University of Copenhagen because they doubted her claims to have performed 1,000 experiments on rats. She was later cleared by external reviewers.

In 2006, an internal university report questioned some of Penkowa's research results. However, once again, a committee of inquiry rejected any suggestion of wrongdoing after consulting external experts.

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Read about it in the news? Not in Norway

Do Norway's newspapers give less attention to locally produced research than they used to? A survey published by the Norwegian Research Council on 19 November suggests they do.

**nordic
outlook**

by Linda Nordling

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The survey "*Forskning viser at...*" conducted by media monitoring company Retriever studied Norwegian news articles published in print or online between 2000 and 2009. At the beginning of the decade, 70 per cent of research-related articles were about Norwegian research. By 2009 this proportion had shrunk to less than 50 per cent.

At the same time, foreign research coverage increased from just over 10 per cent to almost 20 per cent, and research with no attribution increased from hardly any in 2000 to over 10 per cent in 2009. The proportion of articles based on collaborative research involving both Norwegian and foreign researchers stayed at just below 20 per cent.

Some national research areas get better coverage than others. Norwegian research contributed over 70 per cent of stories on social science, agriculture, fishing and forestry in 2009, while only 50 per cent of stories about climate science, natural sciences and health research were based on Norwegian results.

One reason for the declining interest in national research news is that dedicated science journalists are a dying breed in Norway, says Bjørn Vassnes, a freelancer who puts together the left-wing newspaper *Klassekampen's* science pages. Many daily newspapers take their science news straight from news agencies, he says. "Most of these notices come from abroad. Norwegian newspapers don't produce their own research news."

Inger Atterstam, who writes about science and medicine for Swedish daily *Svenska Dagbladet*, suggests another explanation. Embargoed press releases offered by services like EurekAlert, Alphagalileo and the big international scientific journals now dictate the news agenda in western countries, she says. This means that national research faces tougher competition.

Does this development jeopardise Norwegian taxpayers' right to know what happens to public research funds? Arvid Hallén, director of the Norwegian Research Council, is not worried. Norwegian researchers should be encouraged to communicate more, he admits, but the quality of Norwegian science journalism also needs to improve. "At the council we would welcome more critical science reporting."

nordic in brief

MAX IV takes shape

The construction of the 2.6-billion-kroner (280-million-euro) MAX IV synchrotron facility in Lund began on 22 November. "Today

the largest piece of infrastructure ever within Swedish research begins. A big thank-you to Lund and a big thank-you to Sweden," said research minister Jan Björklund.

Norway's research council outlines budget themes

The Norwegian Research Council has suggested four scientific priority themes for the country's 2012 budget. In a submission to the government on 22 November, the council called for money to be spent on basic and industrial research, energy and environmental technology, equipment and infrastructure and climate change.

Aarhus environment institute may close

The National Environmental Research Institute at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, could be shut down as an independent unit, according to a proposal from the university published on 24 November. The institute would become part of the university's science and technology faculty and split in two. Critics say the move would harm the coordination of environmental research in Denmark.

Union boss slams Finnish university reforms

Tapani Kaakkuriniemi, the new chairman of the Finnish researchers' union (FUURT), criticised the government's university reform in his first speech on 27 November. "Useless reporting processes and control methods have mushroomed since the university reform begun. A atmosphere of fear has taken root in universities," he said.

Norway invests in carbon capture

The Norwegian government announced last month that it will invest 40m kroner (5m euros) in carbon capture and storage projects at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). Most of the money will go to updating laboratories at the university. The remainder will be spent on the European Carbon Dioxide Capture and Storage Laboratory Infrastructure project, which NTNU coordinates.

Danish universities get entrepreneurship cash

The Danish government has pledged 80m kroner towards entrepreneurship training at Danish universities. The money will encourage graduates in Aarhus and the Copenhagen metropolitan region to establish businesses, said a statement from the Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority last month.

uk & ireland

UK axes annual survey of industry R&D

The UK government will no longer produce its annual R&D Scoreboard, which analyses R&D spending among the top 1,000 UK and top 1,000 global corporate investors in R&D. The latest edition, which analyses corporate R&D spending in 2009, is the last.

"While this useful tool has helped us to track progress on investment, both domestically and overseas, today's companies better understand the importance of R&D to their long-term success. At the same time, unprecedented financial pressures have made it necessary to reduce public spending," science minister David Willetts wrote in the foreword to the report.

The government said it was inviting sponsors to step forward to continue the annual reports, although it is hard to see who might do this. The report, produced by Company Reporting and the Economist Intelligence Unit, cost the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills more than £410,000 a year.

The loss of the scoreboard is "disappointing" for UK businesses, says David Kingham, a member of the board of the R&D Society and the former managing director of Oxford Innovation. But the bigger loss will be to the government itself, he says. "The scoreboard's greatest value is as feedback to the government on whether things are

by Brian Owens

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going in the right direction," Kingham says. "If there is no monitoring of R&D at the national level, then how will the government know if its policies, such as the R&D tax credit, are working?"

Kieron Flanagan, a lecturer in science and technology policy and management at Manchester Business School, says the context in which the scoreboard is produced has changed since it was first published 20 years ago. "There has been a shift in focus from R&D spending to innovation more broadly," he says. "R&D investment is an input, not an output, and doesn't measure innovation, or capture all the industrial sectors where the UK is strong."

The final scoreboard held some good news for the UK. Industrial R&D spending by the UK's top 1,000 research-active companies fell by just 0.6 per cent in 2009, despite the economic crisis. In total, they spent £25.3 billion on R&D last year.

The scoreboard showed that the UK performed slightly better than the rest of the world, with the top 1,000 global companies spending 1.9 per cent less on R&D in 2009.

uk & i in brief

University fees: this week to see vote and protest

Members of Parliament will vote on plans to raise the cap on tuition fees in England on 9 December. Students have pledged to hold protests on the same day in a last ditch effort to lobby MPs. The protest will be their fourth day of action. Coalition partner the Liberal Democrats has yet to reveal whether the party will collectively abstain, or split with some MPs voting for the measure and others against.

Welsh students exempt from tuition fees hike

Welsh students going to Welsh or English universities will see no hike in their tuition fees, education minister Leighton Andrews announced on 30 November. Welsh universities will enter into the same system as proposed for English universities—with the crucial difference that additional costs for students will be subsidised by the Welsh Assembly Government. English students studying in Welsh institutions will have to pay increased fees of between £6,000 and £9,000, as in England.

Patent box 'poorly targets' research, says IFS

A plan to lower taxes on incomes from patents filed in the UK will cost the UK government "substantial" sums without necessarily boosting research, the Institute of Fiscal Studies has said. Under European law, eligibility criteria for inclusion in the Patent Box could not

be restricted to patentable technologies created in the UK—therefore research and its related benefits could still happen outside the country, says the think tank.

Ireland becomes green economic zone

The EU research commissioner, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, has launched the Green Way initiative to create the first 'green economic zone' within Ireland. It brings together universities, businesses and local authorities in and around Dublin to increase Ireland's share of the international trend towards the commercialisation of being green.

Animal experiments legitimate, says Home Office

The Home Office has found no evidence that there was anything wrong with experiments undertaken by the research organisation Wickham Laboratories, as the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection had claimed. For eight months, the animal rights group placed an infiltrator inside Wickham Laboratories and produced a 50-page report suggesting bad practice.

Minister pitches Russia's silicon valley to UK firms

UK business secretary Vince Cable has highlighted opportunities for UK companies to get involved in Russia's planned technology hub in Skolkovo, outside Moscow. Cable says the huge project presents a perfect opportunity for UK companies and universities to work with their Russian counterparts and develop world-class technology.

Africa and EU agree science action plan

African and EU heads of state adopted an action plan to guide cooperation in science when they met in Libya on 29 and 30 November. The action plan sets out the priority actions for 2011-13 of the Africa-EU Partnership, a protocol for cooperation between the continents in a number of policy areas, including science.

The plan agreed in Tripoli builds on the partnership's first action plan, developed in 2007. This plan identified 19 so-called lighthouse projects outlining proposed collaborations in science, information society and space.

The new action plan moves forward with these lighthouse projects. One of them is the African Research Grants, a funding pot administered from the African Union headquarters in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa. The first call, containing 15 million euros from the European Development Fund, is expected early next year. The long-term ambition is to grow the grant scheme into an African version of the EU's Framework programmes.

Other lighthouse projects include an African scientific awards programme, which has already been launched, and a research programme on water and food security.

The action plan also sets out activities in space-based Earth observation. African and European member states are asked to promote the exploitation of space-based

by Deborah-Fay Ndlovu

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technology to support development goals, and to assess the feasibility of creating an African Space Agency to assist in this.

The action plan proposes a high-level policy dialogue that would bring African and European science ministers together on a regular basis to discuss progress on the partnership. Such a dialogue would boost national ownership of the partnership, which has been weak until now, according to sources in the European Commission.

An analysis published earlier this year by the Europe Africa Research Network also highlighted legitimacy problems within the Africa-EU partnership. The network's report *Africa-EU Relations Between the Summits: 2007-2010* identified low levels of ownership beyond the "inner circle" of those closely involved, such as the European and African Commissions. Member states, parliaments and civil society have not been visible in the implementation of the partnership, the report said.

According to the network, this shows that member states do not yet see the partnership as adding value. This must be addressed in order to secure the Africa-EU partnership's success, the report said.

world in brief

Australia gets R&D tax credit

The Australian parliament passed legislation covering tax incentives for R&D on 22 November.

The legislation is expected to support business R&D with AU\$1.6 billion (1.2bn euros) annually. Small and medium-sized enterprises will receive a 45 per cent refundable credit on their R&D expenditure while larger firms will receive a 40 per cent non-refundable tax credit.

Singapore agency moves into oil and gas research

Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) will be collaborating with local universities on developing new oil and gas equipment, the country's senior trade minister, S Iswaran, announced on 30 November. The initiative sets out to support Singapore's marine and offshore industry. Some of the research will tackle the challenge of drilling for oil and gas in the deep ocean.

World's fastest supercomputer gets new home

China's Hunan province has begun building the country's third national supercomputing centre, where the Tianhe-1A, the world's fastest supercomputer, will be installed. The centre is designed to handle one quadrillion (10^{15}) computing operations per second. When it is ready in late 2011 it is expected to provide services in weather forecasting, scientific research, biological pharmaceuticals and animation design.

Botswana's science university in trouble

The government of Botswana has appointed a team to investigate whether the country can still afford its proposed university of science and technology. Botswana president Ian Khama told the *Botswana Gazette* in November that "delays and cost escalations in the project are likely to affect government's initial plan for the university to open in March 2011". The university has been instructed to freeze recruitment pending the outcome of the review, which is expected to be presented to the country's cabinet in February.

India's first expedition reaches South Pole

India's first scientific expedition to the South Pole reached its destination on 22 November. The eight member team took nine days to reach the pole while collecting data on rock-bed topography, sub-surface ice structure, glacial-geomorphological landforms and snow chemistry. It is hoped that the data will help scientists understand the role the Antarctic plays in monsoon patterns.

Space heads call for robot collaborations

A global summit of heads of space agencies in Washington DC, on 17 November called for improved global collaboration on robotic space exploration. The summit declaration, published after the summit, stated that exploration of the solar system requires a programme "that is well beyond the means of any given nation to pursue alone".

usa

Debt commission offers mixed messages about US science

The much-anticipated final report from the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform appears to safeguard US federal investment in R&D. However, it does single out some science-related programmes that duplicate work and could be eliminated.

The commission—chaired by University of North Carolina president, Erskine Bowles, and former Republican Senator Alan Simpson from Wyoming—states as a core principle the importance of cutting non-productive government spending while also investing in education, infrastructure, and “high-value R&D”. In its final report, released on 1 December, the panel recommends creating a bipartisan “Cut-and-Invest Committee” to identify 2 per cent of the discretionary budget that should be cut and to determine how to redirect half of those savings into high-value investment.

“Over the next decade, the Cut-and-Invest Committee will be expected to recommend more than \$200 billion in discretionary cuts, freeing up \$100bn for high-priority investments America will need to remain competitive, such as increasing college graduation rates, leveraging private capital through an infrastructure bank, and expanding high-value R&D in energy and other critical

by **Rebecca Trager**

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areas,” the report notes.

The panel also takes issue with the “alarming” proliferation of federal programmes spawned by the significant growth in domestic spending over the last decade. The committee says many of these efforts duplicate one another, such as the 20 ongoing efforts at 12 agencies focused on the study of invasive species, and 105 programmes meant to encourage participation in science, technology, education and mathematics.

“Many of these programmes cannot demonstrate to Congress or taxpayers they are actually accomplishing their intended purpose,” the report warns. “Programmes without demonstrable results costs taxpayers billions of dollars and fail those the programmes are intended to serve.”

The Association of American Universities praised the commission’s analysis. “The report, wisely, recognises that strengthened investment in the nation’s future, in areas like research and education, must be integral to the nation’s long-term fiscal strategy, even as we take needed dramatic steps to reduce budget deficits and manage our nation’s debt,” says its president, Robert Berdahl.

usa in brief

NASA finding could bring windfall

The discovery by researchers from NASA’s astrobiology programme of a bacterium in California that can use arsenic in place of phosphorus could be a lifesaver for the space agency’s budget. NASA’s Astrobiology Institute barely survived recent budget cuts. During the Bush administration, the agency’s astrobiology department saw its funding slashed by 50 per cent. Now researchers hope the exciting new discovery will inspire Congress to provide the agency with more money.

Obama confirms clinical trial ethics review

US President Barack Obama has ordered a review of clinical trials after recent revelations that US government researchers deliberately infected people in Guatemala with sexually transmitted diseases in the 1940s. The study is intended to determine if US and international regulations “adequately guard the health and well-being” of participants in government-funded studies, while also investigating the Guatemala case.

AIP launches ‘fast-track’ open-access journal

The American Institute of Physics has launched an open-access journal of applied physics research. The institute says that *AIP Advances* will be a “fast-track” journal, with

accelerated peer review and authors paying a processing fee to publish, so there is no delay between publication and the paper being made available under open access. Each article will also be subject to “post-publication evaluation” by the entire applied physical sciences community, says the AIP.

Chu calls for energy ‘Sputnik moment’

China’s rapid advances in clean energy technology must be met with a similar response to that which spurred the US into space following the launch of the satellite Sputnik in 1957, energy secretary Steven Chu has said. Speaking on 29 November, Chu said that the US should “do what we do best” and must not settle for second place in clean energy R&D.

Growing foreign research powers a ‘security threat’

A National Research Council report says the US government must look urgently at the security implications of the increasing research capacity of foreign countries. *S&T Strategies of Six Countries—Implications for the US* looked at China, Singapore, India, Brazil, Japan and Russia. It concludes that the now global dispersion of the best centres for R&D “will have a potentially enormous impact for US national security policy, which for the past half century has been premised on US economic and technological dominance”.

Institutions award record number of PhDs

america at large

The number of PhDs awarded by US institutions grew again in 2009, reaching the highest number ever reported. According to the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned

Doctorates, at 49,562 degrees, 1.6 per cent more people earned a PhD last year compared with 2008.

Doctorates in science and engineering were up 1.9 per cent, almost entirely driven by an increase in women recipients. The number of men gaining science and engineering doctorates declined slightly. The only major scientific field to see a decline in doctorate numbers was computer science. Although the number has almost doubled over the past decade, 2009 saw a drop of almost 10 per cent from 2008 levels.

California's stem-cell programme gets thumbs up

A review board charged with evaluating the first few years of the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine has made an overwhelmingly positive assessment of the institute's progress.

According to the review, carried out by an external group of eight researchers, ethicists and patient advocates, the body has set up an "ambitious and comprehensive" programme, recruited excellent researchers and established promising international partnerships.

The report comes at a time when media reports suggest the public are unhappy with progress of the institute, created through a state referendum in 2004 with \$3 billion of public funding. Many Californian voters had hoped the centre would be producing therapies already. Two stem cell treatments have gone into clinical trials, but neither is associated with the centre. CIRM is in the sixth year of a 10-year mandate, and founding chairman Robert Klein leaves at the end of the year.

Microsoft's Allen gives Washington State \$26m

Investor, philanthropist and Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen has donated \$26 million to Washington State University to support research on zoonotic diseases—infections that are transmitted from animals to humans.

This, the largest donation in WSU's history, which will also help fund construction of the university's school for animal health, was announced on 2 December.

Part of the gift will be used to match funding for construction of the \$35 million School for Global Animal Health, partly funded through a \$25 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Construction on the 62,000-square-foot research building began in June, and completion is expected in spring 2012.

letter from washington re: anthropological strife

The American Anthropological Association has attracted internal and external criticism after expunging all references to "science" from its mission statement.

At the association's annual conference, in November in New Orleans, the organisation's executive board adopted a new mission statement in its long-range plan that seems to erase any emphasis on science. It deleted a reference to anthropology as "the science that studies public understanding of humankind". In addition, it replaces a commitment to furthering "the science of anthropology" with advancing "the public understanding of humankind".

The Society for Anthropological Sciences—one of more than 20 divisions of the AAA—is outraged. The society has passed a resolution condemning these changes, and its president, Lawrence University anthropologist Peter Neal Peregrine, says they "undermine" American anthropology.

"We object to the change in the mission statement included in the long-range plan because it abandons the core principles of and rationale for the association and because it abandons support of the membership," says the society's resolution. It urges the executive board to amend the new wording.

Alice Dreger, a clinical medical humanities professor at Northwestern University, says on her blog that scientific anthropologists are disturbed and want to know the executive board's justification for the changes. "They are confused about whether they should bother to fight, or just give up and depart the AAA," Dreger writes.

Anthropologists must advocate on the basis of fundamental science, she says. Science does carry particular weight on Capitol Hill and elsewhere, so the danger is that purging science from the association's mission statement will mean a loss of credibility. "We become just another special interest group," Dreger warns.

The hullabaloo about the pending changes reflects increasing tension between the four fields of anthropology—cultural, biological, linguistic, and archaeology. This strain has led to academic infighting, causing what biological anthropologist Julienne Rutherford, from the University of Illinois at Chicago, refers to as "the splintering of socio-cultural and biological factions into separate departments and in some cases, outright dissolution of anthropology departments".

The importance of data-driven scholarship cannot be overemphasised. Yet some anthropologists are ambivalent about labelling such a broad field as a science, preferring the term "scholarly" to "scientific".

But even such sympathisers express concern that AAA's reworded mission statement implies that anthropology is a public service rather than an intellectual activity.

Rebecca Trager

inside out

HAVE IT YOUR WAY A 4.5-billion-euro train station development in Stuttgart has ground to a halt over local residents' concern for a park which contains 282 old trees. The Stuttgart public demonstrated to prevent the German railway company Deutsche Bahn from chopping them down. Now the city is planning to laboriously uproot the trees and plant them in the demonstrators' neighbourhoods. Scientists have warned that this is a waste of money, as old trees rarely survive such a move. On top of that, each tree had to be pruned by one third to prepare it for the move. And now the Stuttgarters are demonstrating again. Because the trees look so ugly.

PHONE HOME Alien life forms—are they out there? NASA's announcement last week that its scientists have found bacteria in an earthly mud puddle previously thought too hostile to host life was a masterclass in the careful use of embargoes and teaser announcements to generate maximum publicity. Last week the world's science pages were dominated by pictures of aliens, ranging from the Roswell video to goopy blue creatures from the latest children's animated movie.

RIGHT VS LEFT HAND The EU began its latest crusade against rampant US industrial dominance last month, when the Commission announced it would investigate the internet search giant Google for antitrust viola-

tions. But at the same time, Google may be providing the Commission with a way out of the community patent morass. If the European Patent Office's experiment with Google machine translation technology is a success, the single largest obstacle to an acceptable EU-wide patent will have been removed. Let's hope Google's bosses aren't the petty type.

WHO GOES THERE? Researchers at the Hetaoping Research and Conservation Centre for the Giant Panda in China have successfully brought dressing up in huge furry panda costumes into the scientific fold. In order to prepare baby pandas for release into the wild, the researchers wear the outfits so as to keep them in an environment free from human influence. But although this way the panda might not be confused once it leaves the centre, it might well be puzzled when the bears it meets in China's forests do not to try and take its temperature or weight it. Or carry it around in a plastic box.

OH MY WORD! The European Commission hosted an anti-jargon conference last month, asking: Does clear writing by administrations contribute to democracy? No, we are not making this up. But we should not poke fun; at least here is a chance to get rid of such howlers as "backwards progress", "innogy" and the ever-present "sustainable innovation".

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