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# Fears grow over Brexit's long-term impact

## But UK could yet access Horizon 2020 until programme ends

**RESEARCH MANAGERS ARE SANGUINE** that the UK's vote to leave the EU will have limited short-term impact on collaborations at their universities—even as their fears grow for the longer term.

There is general consensus that existing grant agreements are legally binding and will not be affected by the outcome of the vote on 23 June, according to interviews with managers and researchers.

Many also say that they expect the Brexit vote will have little impact on new collaborations in the short-term, as the UK will retain full access to Horizon 2020 at least until the conclusion of negotiations on a UK departure from the EU, which have yet to be triggered and could take two years to complete.

"People should avoid missing opportunities," says Michael Browne, head of European research and innovation at University College London. "For the time being, nothing has changed." He adds that he's not aware of any UCL researcher so far who has encountered problems with prospective collaborators as a result of the vote.

That approach is echoed by research managers elsewhere in Europe, several of whom report minimal fallout from the UK's referendum vote so far. "It doesn't seem to be an issue at the University of Helsinki. I don't think there would be any problem with our researchers wanting to form new collaborations with researchers in the UK," says Pasi Sihvonen, director of research services.

However, Renata Schaeffer, European policy and strategy manager at the University of Cambridge, said that one group of prospective collaborators had questioned whether Cambridge should be leading on a proposal. Researchers at the universities of Surrey and Sheffield have also reported problems.

Helen Margetts, director of the Internet Institute at the University of Oxford, says that although specific instances of UK researchers being dumped from projects will be rare, collaboration opportunities will be affected more broadly. "It's better to ask whether anyone has been invited to take part in a European collaborative project since the referendum or had an

by **Craig Nicholson**

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earlier enquiry followed up, and I would think the answer to that is no." Margetts said that the involvement of UK-based researchers in proposals "would be adding a complication to a project that other researchers might well feel they don't want". She also expressed a concern that proposals might be "regarded differently" by evaluators if they have UK-based researchers involved, as "there must be a proportion of reviewers and European Commission people who just don't want to put money Britain's way."

Long-term networks are also a worry for Browne at UCL. "The UK has spent years building up a leading networking position in a number of areas, and I think once you start to question that or if the UK steps away from that position then it will be difficult to regain momentum and other countries will take the lead."

The unknown nature of the UK's future relationship with the EU may also cause people to question whether UK-based researchers will deliver value for money, Browne says. "Impact is a big part of proposals now, and you could argue that the uncertainty around the UK being part of the EU and the single market could potentially limit the UK's impact," he says.

As *Research Europe* went to press, Theresa May looked set to succeed David Cameron as UK prime minister. She said on 30 June that she wouldn't invoke Article 50, to trigger exit negotiations, until 2017. Kurt Dekelelaere, secretary-general of the League of European Research Universities, says he thinks that this timeframe will mean the UK retains full access to Horizon 2020 until the end of the programme.

However, Maryam Hansson Edalat, a research officer at the University of Stockholm, said that although her office is advising researchers to continue collaborating with the UK, people are already "worried about what will happen in the future".

"We don't know," she says, "but it could be messy."

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# Hit or miss

## A pointed innovation report must not gather dust

"Europeans still largely love the new, but want to feel involved in the road to innovation, and to understand the benefits to their own locality and family." Sentiments such as this mark out a new innovation policy document as a cut above the usual blandishments produced to influence policy in Brussels.

The findings of the European Commission senior innovation adviser's review (*see News, page 5*) present a strong and coherent argument that EU innovation policy needs to change. Robert Madelin, a former senior Commission official, spent the last year preparing it at the European Political Strategy Centre, a think tank established to advise Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker. The report outlined a range of interesting ideas about social inclusion, the role of universities and the modernisation of governance, among other things.

Unfortunately, there are reasons to doubt that anyone in Brussels will take up the lead offered by the report to drive forward the broader innovation policy that it recommends. Juncker appears to be in trouble at the moment, with negative stories circulating about his performance, and unfavourable noises emanating from Berlin about his prospects of remaining in office.

The Brexit vote on 23 June has also triggered a landslide of ramifications in Brussels. The question of how to extricate a long-term member of the union threatens to dominate time, energy and institutional capacity in Brussels for a substantial period.

And as Chris Hull, a seasoned observer of EU research and innovation policy in Brussels, points out, the very sentiment behind the Brexit vote has negative implications for any government seeking to fast-forward a new approach to innovation, and open the door to the next Uber or AirBnB. Innovation means winners, but it also means losers; and a majority of voters around Europe may take the view that they have already lost enough.

There are some grounds for optimism. The turmoil of Brexit may, in the longer term, provoke the Commission and other EU institutions to recognise the need for new and more innovative identities. Could that open the way for what Madelin calls a Commission 2.0?

And might it be possible that Brexit could help the rest of the EU to swerve away from pursuing the Anglo-Saxon model of innovation? Instead, could the EU take a more inclusive approach that recognises not just the rights of shareholders but also the need for decent employment conditions and societal reassurance?

In any case, Madelin himself is set to leave the Commission in September. It will fall largely to Carlos Moedas, the research and innovation commissioner, and his boss, EU vice-president Jyrki Katainen, as well as Juncker himself, to try to utilise the findings of his report and get the entire Commission to take innovation more seriously.

For the overriding message of Madelin's assessment is clear: any effective move to build a more innovative Europe will require a far broader political effort—from the Commission and its member states—than has been evident hitherto.

## elsewhere

**"We have dived together on coral reefs all around the world, while she was actually doing work. I've sort of envied that life from time to time."**

*John Holdren*, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, compares life as the United States' top scientist with his wife's career as a biologist. *Nature*, 6/7/16.

**"All we can do is go back and do it again."**

The experimental physicist *Scott Bolton*, who is leading NASA's Juno mission, says that he hopes the spacecraft will shed valuable light on Jupiter's origins. The probe is preparing to collect atmospheric samples after NASA's 1995 Galileo mission failed to provide conclusive evidence about how the planet formed. *The Economist*, 2/7/16.

**"Allowing a small minority to prescribe these remedies adds legitimacy to a pseudoscience."**

*Danny Chambers*, a veterinary scientist at the University of Edinburgh, calls for an end to vets' use of homeopathic treatments for animals. *New Scientist*, 2/7/16.

**"This really is a potential game changer for a major funder to be taking control of the research output."**

The decision by the UK-based Wellcome Trust to publish its grantees' work with open access could trigger other funders to follow suit, says Cornell University physicist and founder of the online preprint platform arXiv.org, *Paul Ginsparg*. *Science*, 5/7/16.

**"The combination of rapid technological development with the gradual increase in retirement age increases the need for new forms of education."**

Nordic Council rapporteur *Poul Nielson* is backing the idea that Nordic countries should make adult education and further training a mandatory right, giving people the chance to go back to school later in life. *EUObserver*, 4/7/16.

## decade

**"The investigation reveals weaknesses in the institutions' use of control systems."**

*Arvid Hallén*, managing director of the Research Council of Norway, calls for action after the country is hit by revelations of a 14-year fraud scandal surrounding on Oslo University Hospital dental researcher Jon Sudbø.

*Research Europe*, 13 July 2006

## what's going on

### **R&D spending target still distant**

The R&D intensity of the EU is far short of its 2020 target of 3 per cent of GDP, with only one of its 28 member states hitting its national target. Denmark, whose R&D target for 2020 is also 3 per cent of GDP, had already reached 3.05 per cent in 2014. The EU spent 2.03 per cent of its GDP on R&D in 2014, according to data collected by the Joint Research Centre.

### **Cybersecurity partnership launched**

The European Commission has launched a public-private partnership on cybersecurity, which will receive up to €450 million from Horizon 2020. The partnership, which launched on 5 July, will help Europe defend itself against cyberattacks and strengthen the competitiveness of its cybersecurity industry, the Commission said in a statement. It hopes that the partnership will attract up to €1.35 billion in private investment.

### **Research groups want protection**

More than 30 European research organisations have written to the president of the European Parliament, calling for action to tackle “increasing threats” to researchers’ personal safety. The letter, signed by José Pío Beltrán, president of the European Plant Science Organisation on behalf of learned societies and research institutes across Europe, made particular reference to a package containing explosive materials posted to the European Food Safety Authority on 7 June.

### **Job criteria must widen, Science Europe says**

Funders and institutions should consider much more than publication records when assessing appointments and grant applications, Science Europe has said in a position paper. The paper, published on 23 June following a workshop in December, said that the present rewards system relied too heavily on publication and citations. It recommended that job and grant applicants also be asked to submit details of activities such as data curation and involvement in peer review.

### **Commission grants glyphosate temporary reprieve**

The European Commission has temporarily extended the marketing authorisation of glyphosate, which is used in weedkillers including Monsanto’s Roundup, after member states were unable to agree on a full reauthorisation. The Commission announced on 29 June that it had extended the marketing authorisation of glyphosate until the European Chemicals Agency completes a review of the safety of the chemical in 2017.

### **Privacy shield approved**

EU member states have approved a legal framework for transferring personal data between the EU and the United States, the EU-US Privacy Shield. The final text of the agreement was approved on 8 July, enabling the European Commission to start implementing the framework. The Commission welcomed the approval, saying in a statement that the shield would “ensure a high level of protection for individuals and legal certainty for business”.

### **Future of neutron research at risk**

The availability of neutron-scattering facilities in Europe will halve within the next 10 to 15 years—despite a new European Spallation Source in Sweden—unless substantial steps are taken, an expert group has said. The warning came from the Neutron Landscape Group, an expert group of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures, in a report on 4 July.

## europe

## Little trust for GM scientists in Germany

Only 3 per cent of German citizens fully trust what scientists say about genetic engineering in agriculture, an annual survey by the outreach organisation Science in Dialogue has found.

The organisation—an initiative of the Stifterverband, an association of German research funders—published the results of its third annual survey on 4 July. Of just over 1,000 respondents, 56 per cent said that they did not trust scientists' views on genetic modification of crops. Only 17 per cent said they either partly or fully trusted scientists, with the remainder undecided.

The result reflects long-standing scepticism about genetic modification in Germany, which has been brought back into the spotlight by Bayer's attempts to take over Monsanto, an American company specialising in GM seeds. The two companies have been in talks since May, sparking a petition against the merger via the website Sum of Us. The petition says that it could lead to a "new era of sterile crops soaked in dangerous pesticides". The petition has so far garnered more than 453,000 signatures.

Monsanto also announced a deal with the German firm Nomad Bioscience on 28 June. The two have agreed on a three-year research project to exchange gene-editing techniques for use in agriculture.

The Science in Dialogue survey, which assessed public opinion on several scientific issues, reported that trust

by **Martyn Jones**

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in scientists' views on climate change was more positive, with only 28 per cent of respondents reporting distrust. The verdict on renewable energy was also in scientists' favour, with 53 per cent saying that they trusted academics on the topic.

The number of respondents declaring an interest in science this year rose slightly to 41 per cent up from 36 per cent in 2015. The survey found that 54 per cent of respondents said that science had too small an influence on politics. Only 10 per cent thought that science did more harm than good.

"Science is not a side issue for the population," said the federal research minister Johanna Wanka in a statement on the survey. "This is a good basis for research policy."

Television was by far the most common way that respondents reported engaging with science, with relatively few attending scientific events, talks or debates. More than two-thirds said that they did not use social media to track events in science and research, but YouTube and other video-based websites were more popular.

On the topic of who should set research funding priorities, 44 per cent said that it should be up to citizens and 32 per cent said scientists should decide. Politicians received only 12 per cent of the vote.

## Commission backs bigger Horizon 2020 budget

The European Commission has set out its proposal for the 2017 EU budget, including €10.3 billion for Horizon 2020.

The 2017 proposal, which must now be negotiated between the European Council and European Parliament, would see commitments for Horizon 2020 increase by €760 million compared with the 2016 budget. The increased allocation for Horizon 2020 indicates that the Commission has protected the research budget against the ongoing refugee crisis, despite predictions to the contrary.

In 2015, the planned Horizon 2020 budget was reduced by €2.2bn to help pay for the European Fund for Strategic Investments, set up by Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker to stimulate private investment in Europe.

Kurt Deketelaere, secretary-general of the League of European Research Universities, welcomed the Horizon 2020 allocation for 2017, but said that it was "a pity that no compensation for Efsi is foreseen". He added that this would have amounted to a confirmation by the Commission that Efsi is "irrelevant" to universities.

The Parliament is now likely to try to push the 2017 research allocation up, against resistance from national governments seeking to reduce EU spending. In 2016, MEPs asked for the proposed €9.3bn to be raised by €707m to offset losses to Efsi, while the Council sought a reduc-

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tion of €83m. The two tussled for six months, eventually reaching a compromise Horizon 2020 allocation of €9.5bn.

In March, the Parliament passed a resolution reiterating its commitment to fight for an increase in the Horizon 2020 budget to compensate for Efsi losses. A second report on the midterm review of the EU's seven-year budget on 30 June "noted with great concern" that Horizon 2020 proposal success rates had dropped to just 13 per cent.

Thomas Estermann, director of governance and funding at the European University Association, said that it would be important for the Council to realise that low success rates incur big costs to institutions. "They need to support Horizon 2020 at an appropriate level because otherwise a lot of money is wasted in the system," he said.

The Commission's budget proposal was delayed by the UK referendum on its membership of the EU. Estermann said that the outcome of the vote raised questions over the annual budget process, as well as a planned review of the EU's seven-year budget, which is due this year. "There are so many uncertainties now with Brexit, the refugee crisis and security issues, and those all make it more difficult to predict what will happen," he said.

# Commission told to broaden approach to innovation

Europe has what it takes to be a world-leader in innovation if it takes a more nuanced and society-focused approach in its policies, the European Commission's innovation adviser, Robert Madelin, has said.

The message follows a year-long exercise gathering input from EU officials, academics and business advisers. In a 20-page document, Madelin identified issues to be tackled including a greater focus on people's skills, health and attitudes, and an appreciation of regional differences.

Madelin's report argued that policymakers focused too heavily on the role of research funding in delivering innovation. That approach is simplistic, it said, and a set of other factors, from public acceptance to the modernisation of governance, are just as important.

"Europe has what it takes to go on innovating—and if we did a few easy things we could make a big difference," he told *Research Europe*. "Innovation is a bit more complicated than our current radar screen allows us to see."

One concrete suggestion made in the report was for universities to play a more radical role in nurturing innovation. Arguing that "very few European academic institutions are yet committed to radical change", Madelin used the Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands as an example for other institutions to follow.

He also highlighted a need to rethink employment models, to reflect the impact of robotics and zero-hours contracts, and the continent's approach to mental

by Laura Greenhalgh

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health, as two major contributors to future innovation.

The report has impressed some observers: Polish physicist and Commission innovation adviser Jerzy Langer described it as a "political game changer", given the seniority of Madelin's role. "Nobody at a comparable level and standing has come close to this level of thinking," he said.

Chris Hull, head of EU liaison at Luxembourg's national innovation agency, Luxinnovation, said that the report presented "good, challenging ideas", but questioned how easily its recommendations could be realised in the present political climate. "The Brexit vote had less to do with Europe than with globalisation, and a sense of being left out by others who benefit," said Hull. "Innovation is about creative destruction, which means few short-to-medium-term winners, and relatively many losers. How well do governments encourage that?"

Madelin acknowledged this tension, which he described as a "branding issue" for the Commission. He said that it reinforced the report's argument that social factors should be given more emphasis in innovation policy.

The report is now in the hands of Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker. Madelin will step down in September, when his year-long appointment as innovation adviser ends. He said that the position is not likely to be continued, as its mandate has now been fulfilled.

## Open-access pilot 'shows funders' role'

An EU-project paying article processing charges to open-access journals for Framework 7 research is demonstrating that funders can take a bigger role in open access, despite low uptake, the pilot's coordinator has said.

The OpenAIRE pilot won €4 million from Horizon 2020 to contribute to the APCs. A progress report published on 27 June said that it had funded 421 publications in its first year and allocated about €1m in grants.

Just over half of this money has been spent on APCs, with block grants amounting to €300,000 also being awarded to publishers and institutions as pre-paid funds. Around €200,000 has been allocated to support open-access journals that do not charge APCs.

Pablo de Castro, open-access project officer at the Association of European Research Libraries (Liber), which manages the pilot, said that OpenAIRE's progress showed a "clear opportunity for research funders to support more effective implementation of their open access policies". This is despite a "rather low" uptake, de Castro said. Only

by Craig Nicholson

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a quarter of funds have been allocated so far, despite a scheduled end date for the pilot of April 2017. The low participation is mainly due to a lack of awareness of the pilot and a lack of funding for libraries to support it, he said.

The pilot excludes hybrid journals, in keeping with the policies of many national funding agencies, and de Castro said that this had also been a hindrance. Hybrid journals often charge substantially higher APCs than wholly open-access journals, and may result in institutions being charged both APCs and a standard subscription. However, they are popular with some researchers because they are typically well-established journals with high impact factors.

De Castro said that the pilot had taught Liber a lot about the challenges of meeting open-access policies. "There is a big opportunity for libraries and research support services to help researchers navigate the policy requirements from funders," he said.

## interview magnus ranstorp

# In for the long haul

The Radicalisation Awareness Network aims to tackle extremism, from preventing radicalisation to helping with rehabilitation, Magnus Ranstorp tells **Inga Vesper**.

On 22 March, the deadliest terrorist attack in Belgium's history hit Brussels. Thirty-two people were killed when several coordinated nail bombs were set off at the airport and in Maalbeek metro station in the heart of the European quarter. The three suicide bombers were affiliated with the so-called Islamic State.

Attacks such as this are becoming a fact of life for Europeans, following decades of problems in the Middle East and European involvement in several wars in the region. But across the EU, a grassroots network of researchers, on-the-ground anti-extremism practitioners and former extremists has come together in an attempt to reach the core of the problem.

"There was a recognition that the issue of violent extremism wasn't going away," says Magnus Ranstorp, a research director at the Swedish National Defence College who specialises in terrorism. "All the professionals working on this issue kept having meetings about what to do—it was like Groundhog Day, always starting over from the same point."

The European Commission's answer was to create a "network of networks", bringing together more than 1,800 people including academics, social workers, victims and former extremists under the Radicalisation Awareness Network. Established in September 2011 by the then home-affairs commissioner Cecilia Malmström as part of the EU's internal security strategy, the initiative is now run through a management body called the RAN Centre of Excellence that was set up in 2015.

The Commission has pledged €25 million over four years to the centre, based in Amsterdam. Its 2016 budget is €5m. With the Commission as taskmaster, the centre serves to organise and coordinate 10 working groups across a host of different issues. "If you take all the different working groups, and you lay them out in a line, you have all the steps you need for a successful action plan," says Ranstorp.

The Exit working group looks at helping people who have joined terrorist organisations to leave them and return to life in ordinary society. Another group focuses on remembrance of the victims of terrorist attacks and supporting their families. The Prison and Probation working group looks at avoiding radicalisation of those in prison—an issue that is increasingly coming to the fore, Ranstorp says. "These groups keep

changing depending on what topics are hot in their subject area, and how they change direction," he says.

The RAN works closely with national organisations and the public. Its researchers and practitioners also support countries particularly susceptible to extremism. "We interact with vulnerable communities when they are in crisis," Ranstorp says. "We can provide context and meaning."

One focus is helping cities develop action plans to deal with terrorist attacks and up their game in prevention. Ranstorp says that the centre is proud of its work on identifying the issue of foreign fighters, the term coined for disenfranchised young people from affluent Europe who go to join terrorist groups. The network is planning a major conference on this issue in the autumn.

For practitioners and governments looking for guidance, the network provides a pool of experts. It is here that academics play their most important role. Scientists contribute to RAN reports and policy papers, gather and distribute data, and do qualitative research.

In return for collaborating with the network, researchers get unique access to practitioners working on the ground. "Many researchers don't have access to field experience in this very difficult area, as there are lots of ethical and safety issues," Ranstorp says. "There is an opportunity to talk with and collaborate with practitioners. It gives researchers a chance to get on the inside."

The network also helps to bring together researchers across disciplines, says Ranstorp. It is working with sociologists, anthropologists, international relations specialists and legal experts to ensure that it takes an interdisciplinary approach. This greatly helps to inform its publications, the latest of which deals with preventing radicalisation opportunities in prisons, he says.

An interdisciplinary outlook helps the network function on different levels, Ranstorp says. Producing publications is one goal, but working directly with Europe's marginalised and disenfranchised youth, their families and policymakers is the centre's core function, he explains.

Providing a forum to share experiences and emotions for practitioners dealing with radicalisation and terrorism is an important source of personal support, says Ranstorp. "This work is very moving, especially when it comes to remembrance of victims, and it can be emotionally very difficult," Ranstorp says. "But our members are very proud of the work that they do and that it makes the world safer and less intolerant. That is the important part."

*More to say? Email comment@ResearchResearch.com*

'We can provide context and meaning to vulnerable communities in crisis.'

cardew and tindemans **view from the top**

# Open before it was fashionable: ESOF on socially minded science

Back in 2004, it was a bold step to call the first pan-European general science conference the EuroScience Open Forum. The 'EuroScience' part made sense: that's the grassroots organisation behind it. And 'forum' described the knowledge exchange that the founders were trying to achieve. But 'open'? What did that mean?

The original idea was for ESOF to be the European equivalent of the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. But fairly early on, the founders decided that a cookie-cutter approach wouldn't work in Europe.

For example, AAAS meetings are usually held in edge-of-town conference centres. ESOF's founders, in contrast, wanted the meetings to take place at the centre of the host city, becoming part of vibrant urban cultural life. After all, if science is recognised as being at the heart of society, then meetings to celebrate its achievements and discuss its future should take place in public spaces.

In those early days, the word 'open' was not applied to science as often as it is today. Consequently there was some confusion as to the purpose of ESOF. Was it to be a public science festival open to everyone? Was it a gathering for specialists in public engagement with science? Not really, although ESOF incorporates elements of both.

The emphasis instead was to be on providing an open space for science to be discussed in its widest sense: for scientists to share their work with scientists in other disciplines, to consider the myriad factors that affect their working practice—including policy, investment, ethics, business and careers—and to discuss trends in all of the above. All of this, however, is discussed within the context of science and society, and accompanied by a public Science in the City programme.

**FROM EARLY ON, ESOF HAS SEEN** intense discussion of developments in the organisation, practice and funding of science in Europe. The European Research Council, for example, has been highly visible at each ESOF since Munich hosted the meeting in 2006, the year before the council was officially founded. The same goes for discussions of responsible research and innovation, which will have a high profile in Manchester this month.

Many of the overarching concepts discussed at ESOF—such as funding and research governance, research

*Gail Cardew is chair of the ESOF Supervisory Committee and Royal Institution professor of science, culture and society. Peter Tindemans is secretary general of EuroScience. ESOF2016 will take place in Manchester, UK, on 24-27 July.*

integrity, science advice to governments, ethics and innovation, access to data and privacy—have been aired at other science policy discussions before and since. But ESOF has given these issues a platform for wider debate, opening the policy agenda to a wider audience of scientists, particularly early-career researchers.

Indeed, the participation of young scientists is a central component of the open-science agenda. This is why EuroScience has engaged with informal movements of younger scientists in southern Europe, who have been hit hard by governments' austerity programmes. ESOF2014 in Copenhagen gave these researchers a platform to highlight their plight and the unwillingness of their governments to help.

Another example is the issue of scientific advice to governments and the European Commission. EuroScience and ESOF embraced the decision to create a chief scientific adviser for the Commission president, and then the high-level group of scientific advisers. The launch and first meeting of the European Science Advisers' Forum took place at ESOF in Copenhagen.

And to show that an open discussion in the science community means more than organising a web consultation, EuroScience and several European learned societies belonging to the Initiative for Science in Europe will use ESOF2016 to present research commissioner Carlos Moedas with structured inputs for the mid-term review of Horizon 2020.

ESOF2016 at Manchester promises to take all these open discussions one step further: the science-to-business programme has been expanded, as has the career programme. There will be important debates, for example on gene-editing technology and patenting, both of which need to be opened up to society in general.

The agenda that was so important to ESOF's founders back in 2004 is now centre stage, not just in Manchester this July, but also in the three 'O's' prioritised by research Commissioner Carlos Moedas: open science, open innovation and open to the world. Moreover, such principles are increasingly visible in the work of EuroScience's sister organisations in Brazil, China, India, Japan, Korea and the United States, and in the participation of scientists and politicians from Africa at these events. No longer is there any confusion about the meaning or importance of the 'O' in ESOF. *Something to add? Email comment@ResearchResearch.com*

'ESOF is a platform for wider debate, opening the policy agenda to a wider audience.'

**view from the top**    diana wildschut

# Our do-it-yourself university gives power to the people

You could not call Amersfoort the cultural capital of the Netherlands. Indeed, it has a much less lively atmosphere than some other Dutch cities of a similar size. The crucial difference is that most of these more vibrant cities have either an arts academy or a university.

It is not the university that brings the city to life, but the mix of curious people who leave their marks on the streets and plazas. It is not the shiny buildings, but the tiny things happening on the streets of the old city or in ex-industrial buildings in the outskirts.

I am a member of a small group of artists and inventors based in Amersfoort. When we suggested that Amersfoort needed a university, the answer was always: But you cannot just start a university. Why not, we wondered? And what would happen if we did? The only way to find out was to try.

In December 2011, we put up a sign outside our workshop: University of Amersfoort. Now in its fifth year, it's a good time to look at our achievements and problems.

The university launched with lectures, experiments and brainstorming sessions, planned and conducted in cooperation with some well-known scientists. We were hoping to attract some professional researchers keen to do good science outside of traditional academia. They never came. But others did: citizens who wanted to engage in scientific research, and pseudoscientists who thought they had struck gold.

These citizen investigators bring their own questions, and do all their own research. The university helps by training them to be critical about their goals, methods and the quality of their work. We help them to use the scientific method and to do statistics. About 10 research projects have emerged from this, some involving a single investigator and others with more than 50.

All projects start as curiosity-driven, with no budget. As soon as they start getting results, though, funders get interested. The university's biggest project, Measure your City, which surveys the physical and biological effects of climate change and public attitudes to the issue, has got funding for three years

from the local government and the Dutch water-management board. This has not influenced its methods or goals. The university only accepts funding if it does not limit freedom or contradict our core values of open knowledge and a sustainable future.

When the pseudoscientists came, we were not sure whether to be dis-

turbed or amused. Talking to them, we found that they were curious people who lacked some tools for critical thinking. They also felt unjustly ignored by universities.

We decided to accept their projects under the condition that they would really try to find out if their 'star coil' worked and, if it did, what the mechanism was. We have not heard from them since.

**IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE UNIVERSITY** has become a partner for academics. We cooperate with about 10 other institutions, including the University of Bergen in Norway and Utrecht University in the Netherlands. They are interested in our experience with engaging citizens in serious and independent research and in tapping into lay knowledge, which many academics value but struggle to access.

Other reactions have been less positive. We have received hate mail, suggesting we would be a disgrace to the name of universities and assuming we knew nothing about science and would not use the scientific method.

Citizen science is often assumed to be more vulnerable to biases than academic science. True, citizen scientists are more likely to be prey to, for example, confirmation bias. But they may be less likely to have biases related to career or time pressure, since most are not pursuing a career in science and are not in any hurry.

They might even do some things better than academic or industry researchers, such as sharing their data and providing a thorough description of their methods. With no funders to please, they tend to share successes and failures alike. They often use peer-review in every phase of their research.

This is not to be starry-eyed. We meet researchers in science and technology studies who think that citizen science is the answer to crises in academia such as those of replication, misconduct and vested interests.

But our approach has its limitations. Freedom comes with limited funding. Knowledge created by citizens is open access but hard to find. Its quality varies, but it is easy to judge. Data is shared but rarely standardised.

Science by citizens is not going to save the world or replace academic science, but the University of Amersfoort is ready to make a contribution. We should all be looking openly and critically at how we can combine the best of both worlds.

*More to say? Email comment@ResearchResearch.com*

*Diana Wildschut is an independent artist who combines science and art and focuses on complex systems.*

'We have received hate mail, assuming we know nothing about science.'

every new opportunity every discipline

## highlights

### Public procurement law

The Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs invites tenders for consultancy services for completeness and compliance checks of national transposition measures and other legal assessment services in the field of EU public procurement law. The contract is worth €2 million [2].

### Coal and steel

The European Commission Research Fund for Coal and Steel invites proposals for its research programme. The budget is €42.1 million [11].

### Social innovation

The Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion invites proposals for its operating grants within the employment and social innovation programme. The budget is €2.2 million [12].

### Transnational drugs policy

The Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs invites proposals for supporting initiatives in the field of drugs policy. The budget is €2.01 million [15].

### Surveillance of influenza

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control invites tenders for the support of surveillance activities of human influenza in Europe. The budget is €2 million [41].

## deadlines

Opportunities from previous issues of *Research Europe*, listed by closing date. European Commission and associated funders marked **EU**.

Each entry is followed by a Web id

### July

**22 AU** Arthritis Australia/Australian Rheumatology Association Heald fellowship 252663

**24 UK** Lush animal testing prize 1173005

**25 EU** Directorate-General for Energy technical assistance in monitoring and analysis of renewable energy data 1190382

**EU** Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation (EuropeAid) promoting renewable energy for climate change mitigation in Namibia 1190371

**26 EU** Innovative Medicines Initiative Joint Undertaking H2020-JTI-IMI2-2016-09 IMI ninth call for proposals – two stage 1189052

**27 EU** Central European Initiative know-how exchange programme – Italy 1179745

**EU** Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs study on the legal aspects of the supplementary protection certificates in the EU 1190385

**28 EU** Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs European community of women business angels for women entrepreneurs 1190291

**EU** Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency study on the impact of the internet and social media on youth participation and youth work 1190444

**UK** Health Foundation efficiency research programme 1181476

**29 EU** European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training financing apprenticeships and dual vocational education and training in the EU 1190537

**FR** European Society of Cardiology Heart Rhythm Association Proctor programme 1179881

**FI** Mikkeli Development Miksei Oy market study on the UK facilities using wood-based biomass 1190525

**FI** Nordic Council of Ministers tenders for a project on agriculture initiatives and 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 1190507

**30 FR** European Society of Cardiology young thrombosis researchers exchange grant 1186168

**31 DE** Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Sofja Kovalevskaja award 175743

**CH** AO Foundation CID clinical research fellowship programme for surgeons – craniomaxillofacial trauma 1189569

**FR** Association pour la Recherche sur le Cancer Léopold Griffuel prize 254982

**AU** Australasian Sleep Association Helen Bearpark travelling scholarship 186153

**EU** Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety EU health awards for NGOs 1185577

**BE** European Ceramic Society frontiers of research call 1170595

**EU** European Food Safety Authority traineeships 1177496

**UK** European Society for Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition networking project grants 1169289

**UK** European Society for Paediatric Research young investigator awards 203431

**FR** Institut Pasteur doctoral programme Calmette and Yersin 1178495

**UK** Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine international centre travel grants 179633

**AT** Pfizer UK ARTICULUM fellowship in arthritis and pain 191817

### August

**1 DK** Basic and Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology Journal nordic prize in basic and clinical pharmacology and toxicology 1169100

**EU** Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development framework contract for the evaluation studies of common agricultural policy measures contributing to the general objectives of balanced territorial development 1189775

**EU** Directorate-General for Energy EU observatory on energy poverty 1190164

**NL** European Hematology Association advanced short term collaboration award 1184342

**NL** European Hematology Association junior short term collaboration award 1184341

**NL** European Hematology Association research grants 1179803

**DE** European Molecular Biology Organisation conferences and conference series 212934

## europa

### EU labour market

The Directorate-General for the Environment invites tenders for a study on the impact of circular economy policies on the EU labour market. The tenderer will analyse the impacts of a more circular and resource-efficient economy on the labour market. The contract is worth €190,000. **Web id: 1190556**  
**Email:** env-tenders@ec.europa.eu  
**Deadline: 18 August 2016** [1]

### EU public procurement law

The Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs invites tenders for consultancy services for completeness and compliance checks of national transposition measures and other legal assessment services in the field of EU public procurement law. The commission may also require a legal analysis on the national provisions beyond the scope of EU Directives. The contract is worth €2 million. **Web id: 1190683**  
**Email:** grow-g3@ec.europa.eu  
**Deadline: 22 August 2016** [2]

### EU environment tenders

The Directorate-General for the Environment invites tenders for the following opportunities:

- a study on the environmental potential of the collaborative economy, worth €170,000. **Web id: 1190635**

- a study on EU integrated policy assessment for the freshwater and marine environment, on the economic benefits of EU water policy and on the costs of its non-implementation, worth €1.65 million. **Web id: 1190684**

**Email:** env-tenders@ec.europa.eu  
**Deadline: 22 August 2016** [4]

### EU financing defence

The European Defence Agency invites tenders to establish a collaborative financial mechanism for defence. The tenderer will provide analysis, design, set-up and management for the mechanism. The contract is worth €700,000 over 40 months. **Web id: 1190607**

**Email:** procurement@eda.europa.eu  
**Deadline: 22 August 2016** [5]

### EU cohesion policy

The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy invites tenders for a study on macroregional strategies and their links with cohesion policy. The tenderer will inform European institutions, national and regional authorities and other stakeholders about the performance of the up-and-running macroregional strategies. The contract is worth €300,000. **Web id: 1190613**

**Email:** regio-transnational-and-interregional-cooperation@ec.europa.eu  
**Deadline: 24 August 2016** [6]

### EU biodiversity threats

The Directorate-General for the Environment invites tenders for its study on mitigating a new infectious disease in salamanders to counteract a loss of

## Online Funding Search

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European biodiversity. The tenderer will identify the current spread of the disease in Europe, establish an early warning system, develop emergency action plans and provide proof-of-concepts for sustainable mitigation measures. The contract is worth €900,000 over 36 months.

**Web id:** 1190686

**Email:** env-tenders@ec.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 25 August 2016 [7]

### EU emissions inventories

The Directorate-General for the Environment invites tenders for a comprehensive review of member states' emissions inventories under the Directive 2001/81/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23.10.2001 on national emission ceilings for certain atmospheric pollutants. The tenderer will carry out a comprehensive review of the member states' emission inventories. The contract is worth €1 million over 14 months.

**Web id:** 1190715

**Email:** env-tenders@ec.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 26 August 2016 [8]

### EU climate report

The Directorate-General for Climate Action invites tenders for the preparation of the EU seventh national communication and third biennial report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The tenderer will provide support in fulfilling reporting obligations of the EU under the UNFCCC. Funding is worth €250,000 over 18 months.

**Web id:** 1190745

**Email:** clima-tenders@ec.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 29 August 2016 [9]

### EU advanced computing

The Partnership for Advanced Computing in Europe invites applications for its fourth call under its SME high-performance computing adoption in Europe programme. This provides European enterprises with the expertise necessary to take advantage of the innovation possibilities created by high performance computing. The selected SMEs will have access to the partnership's infrastructure.

**Web id:** 1182699

**Email:** communication@prace-ri.eu

**Deadline:** 9 September 2016 [10]

### EU coal and steel

The European Commission Research Fund for Coal and Steel invites proposals for its research programme. This supports research projects, pilot and demonstration projects, and accompanying measures in the coal and steel sectors. The total budget is €42.1 million.

**Web id:** 1162304

**Email:** rtd-steel-coal@ec.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 15 September 2016 [11]

### EU social innovation

The Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion invites proposals for its operating grants within the employment and social innovation programme. This supports projects of European level networks in promoting social inclusion and poverty reduction and in promotion of access to finance on micro-finance or social enterprise finance level. The total budget is €2.2 million. Grants are between €100,000 and €1m each.

**Web id:** 1190724

**Email:** empl-vp-2016-012@ec.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 16 September 2016 [12]

### EU deep learning

The European Defence Agency invites tenders for deep learning application to defence – DeepLearn. The tenderer will prepare the ground for tracing, identifying and selecting projects related to key skills and competences for the defence sector. The contract is worth €200,000.

**Web id:** 1190639

**Email:** procurement@eda.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 3 October 2016 [13]

### EU transport

The Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport invites proposals for programme support action under the connecting Europe facility in the field of trans-European transport network. This supports the maintenance, adaptation and development of the services framework architecture. Funding is worth €1.2 million over four years.

**Web id:** 1190657

**Email:** move-tender-c3@ec.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 15 October 2016 [14]

### EU transnational drugs policy

The Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs invites proposals for supporting initiatives in the field of drugs policy. This call supports transnational projects in the area of EU drugs policy. A total budget of €2.01 million is available, funding four to five projects.

**Web id:** 1190632

**Email:** home-drugs@ec.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 18 October 2016 [15]

### EU energy infrastructure

The Innovation and Networks Executive Agency invites proposals for its call on Connecting Europe Facility energy. This supports projects within the framework of the trans-European networks policy in the energy sector. The budget is €600 million.

**Web id:** 1189360

**Email:** inea-cef-energy-calls@ec.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 8 November 2016 [16]

### Climate tenders

Nordic Council of Ministers invites tenders for the following opportunities:

- a feasibility study for a Nordic support on subsidy reform. The budget is DKK700,000 (€94,100). **Web id:** 1190655

- a project on transformation to low-carbon shipping, under the Nordic Working Group for Global Climate Negotiations. The budget is DKK400,000.

**Web id:** 1190553

**Email:** outi.leskela@ymparisto.fi

**Deadline:** 29 July 2016 [18]

### Sharing economy project

The Working Group on Environment and Economy under the Nordic Council of Ministers invites tenders for a project on environmental impact and potential of the sharing economy. Projects should analyse possible environmental benefits from the sharing economy. Projects usually receive between DKK250,000 (€33,600) and DKK400,000.

**Web id:** 1190554

**Email:** jens.perus@ely-keskus.fi

**Deadline:** 12 August 2016 [19]

### Genetic diseases research

The Jérôme Lejeune Foundation invites applications for its research grants. These support research on Down syndrome or

other intellectual disability from genetic origin appearing in early childhood. Grants are worth up to €40,000 each.

**Web id:** 213435

**Email:** conseilscientifique@fondation-lejeune.org

**Deadline:** 14 August 2016 [20]

### EU spin your thesis call

The European Space Agency invites proposals for its spin your thesis call. This enables teams of students to conduct research on hypergravity conditions in a number of fields such as biology, biochemistry, microbiology, optical physics, material sciences, fluid dynamics, geology and plasma physics. Funding will cover part of the travel, accommodation and hardware costs.

**Web id:** 259707

**Email:** spinyourthesis@esa.int

**Deadline:** 4 September 2016 [21]

### Meteorological tenders

EUMETSAT invites tenders for the following opportunities:

- contract on investigation of Meteosat second generation spinning enhanced visible and infrared imager and EUMETSAT polar system infrared atmospheric sounding interferometer derived atmospheric instability in relation of other observations. **Web id:** 1190631

- multi-view, multi-channel, multi-polarisation imaging mission cloud algorithm development support.

**Web id:** 1190754

**Deadline:** 19 September 2016 [26]

### EU molecular plant sciences

ERA-Net ERA-CAPS invites applications for its Europe-USA call – strengthening transnational research in the molecular plant sciences. This supports collaborative transnational research in fundamental molecular plant science.

**Web id:** 1189535

**Email:** era-caps.callsecretariat@dfg.de

**Deadline:** 28 September 2016 [27]

### EU future of manufacturing

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions invites tenders for a study on the future of manufacturing – policy developments and practices of apprenticeships in selected EU member states and world competing regions. The tenderer will conduct an analytical review of apprenticeships in the manufacturing sector. The total budget is €175,000.

**Web id:** 1190644

**Email:** osutenders@eurofound.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 4 August 2016 [28]

### EU genotoxicity of pesticides

The European Food Safety Authority invites tenders for the evaluation of the applicability of existing quantitative structure-activity relationship models for predicting the genotoxicity of pesticides and similarity analysis related with genotoxicity of pesticides for facilitating of grouping and read across. The tenderer will evaluate the applicability of existing (Q)SAR models for prediction of genotoxicity of pesticides and their metabolites. The contract is worth €300,000.

**Web id:** 1190658

**Email:** efsaprocedurement@efsa.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 26 August 2016 [30]

### Political science fellowships

The European University Institute invites applications for the following opportunities:

- the Jean Monnet postdoctoral fellowships, including a monthly stipend of €2,500, travel reimbursement and family allowances. **Web id:** 192263

- the Max Weber fellowships, including a monthly stipend of €2,000, travel reimbursement and family allowances. **Web id:** 198537

**Email:** applyfellow@eui.eu

**Deadline:** 25 October 2016 [33]

### EU gender statistics

The European Institute for Gender Equality invites tenders for its contract on maintenance and update of gender statistics tools and resources. The tenderer will develop, analyse and update statistical data on gender equality in EU member states. The contract is worth up to €1.6 million.

**Web id:** 1190580

**Email:** procurement@eige.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 5 August 2016 [34]

### EU illicit drugs

ERA-Net ERANID invites applications for its second joint call on society and response to drug use. This aims to enhance EU research capacity in drug research by improving coordination and cooperation between national and regional funding programmes. The total budget is €3 million. Grants are worth up to €850,000 each over three years.

**Web id:** 1197773

**Email:** eranid@sicad.min-saude.pt

**Deadline:** 18 October 2016 [37]

### Nordic health and welfare

NordForsk, in collaboration with the Danish Council for Independent Research, the Academy of Finland, the Icelandic Centre for Research Rannís, the Research Council of Norway, the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare, and the Swedish Research Council, invite applications for their Nordic register-based research projects. This call targets research utilising the Nordic research infrastructures made up by population-based registers and healthcare data. The total budget is NOK67 million (€7.1m), and one project may apply for up to NOK10m for a period of three to five years.

**Web id:** 1190402

**Deadline:** 5 October 2016 [38]

### EU work safety and fumigants

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work invites tenders for review of human health risks and prevention practices during handling of fumigated containers in ports. The tenderer will carry out a structured review that evaluates the risks coming from the exposition to pesticides in harbour work and make recommendations on how such risks can be minimised. The contract is worth up to €59,900 over nine months.

**Web id:** 1190694

**Email:** procurement-pru@osha.europa.eu

**Deadline:** 29 July 2016 [39]

### EU green public procurement

The Joint Research Centre invites tenders for support studies for policy criteria development for three product groups –

data centres, maintenance of public spaces and imaging equipment. The tenderer will develop green public procurement criteria and revise the criteria for imaging equipment. The budget is €290,000 divided into three lots over 20 months.

**Web id: 1190723**

**Email:** jrc-seville-procurement@ec.europa.eu

**Deadline: 26 August 2016** [40]

### EU surveillance of influenza

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control invites tenders for the support of surveillance activities of human influenza in Europe. The tenderer will provide influenza surveillance support across quality assurance, capacity building, training and mortality monitoring. The budget is €2 million.

**Web id: 1190609**

**Email:** ecdc.procurement@ecdc.europa.eu

**Deadline: 10 August 2016** [41]

### Childhood cancer grants

The Swedish Childhood Cancer Foundation invites applications for the following opportunities:

- clinical project grants, which cover monitoring costs, operating costs, equipment, publication costs, travel costs and salary costs for up to three years.

**Web id: 1190582**

- co-financed EU-projects in the field of paediatric oncology, which cover up to 25 per cent of the total project costs over a period of one to three years.

**Web id: 1174574**

- project grants for paediatric oncol-

ogy, which cover operating costs, minor equipment, publication costs, travel costs and salary costs for a period of up to three years. **Web id: 1167297**

- rare childhood cancer grants, which cover operating costs, minor equipment, publication costs, travel costs and salary costs. **Web id: 1190578**

**Email:** anders.hoglund@barncancer-fonden.se

**Deadline: 9 September 2016** [45]

### EU laboratory assessment

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control invites tenders for its external quality assessment of performance of laboratories participating in the European antimicrobial resistance surveillance network (EARS-Net). The tenderer will assess the accuracy of quantitative antimicrobial susceptibility test results reported by participating individual laboratories. The contract is worth €470,000 for a duration of 48 months.

**Web id: 1190685**

**Email:** ecdc.procurement@ecdc.europa.eu

**Deadline: 9 September 2016** [46]

### Turkish economy

The Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey invites applications for its research awards. These support academic studies in the field of Turkish economy, emerging market economies or central banking. Prizes are worth up to TL15,000 (€4,600) each.

**Web id: 1185673**

**Email:** yarisma@tcmb.gov.tr

**Deadline: 29 July 2016** [52]

### Cultural protection grants

The British Council and the Department for Culture Media and Sport invite expressions of interest for their cultural protection fund. This aims to create opportunities for economic and social development through fostering, safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage in conflict affected regions overseas. The total budget is £30 million (€35m). Grants are worth between £5,000 to £500,000 over one year and up to £3m for multi-year proposals.

**Web id: 1190696**

**Deadline: 1 August 2016** [53]

### Employment study

The Welsh Government invites tenders for the provision of an evaluation of communities for work. The tenderer will provide the government with an evaluation of the Communities for Work programme on employment and employability in the country. The budget is £200,000 (€234,700) over 16 months.

**Web id: 1190680**

**Email:** cpsprocurementadvice@wales.gsi.gov.uk

**Deadline: 5 August 2016** [54]

### Metrology grants

The European Association of National Metrology Institutes (EURAMET), on behalf of the European Metrology Research Programme joint research project-consortia, invites applications for its researcher mobility grants. These aim to increase and diversify capacities in metrology by supporting researchers

undertaking transnational guestwork related to metrology for energy and environment. Funding is worth up to €45,300.

**Web id: 1190708**

**Email:** empra169@npl.co.uk

**Deadline: 5 September 2016** [57]

## rest of world

### Livestock vaccines

The International Development Research Centre under the livestock vaccine innovation fund programme, invites applications for its innovations in livestock vaccines global call for research proposals. This supports the use of the latest cutting-edge innovations to accelerate the development of new vaccines against livestock diseases. The budget is CA\$1.5 million (€1m) to support up to eight research projects over up to two years.

**Web id: 1190594**

**Email:** lvif@idrc.ca

**Deadline: 12 September 2016** [58]

### Korean studies

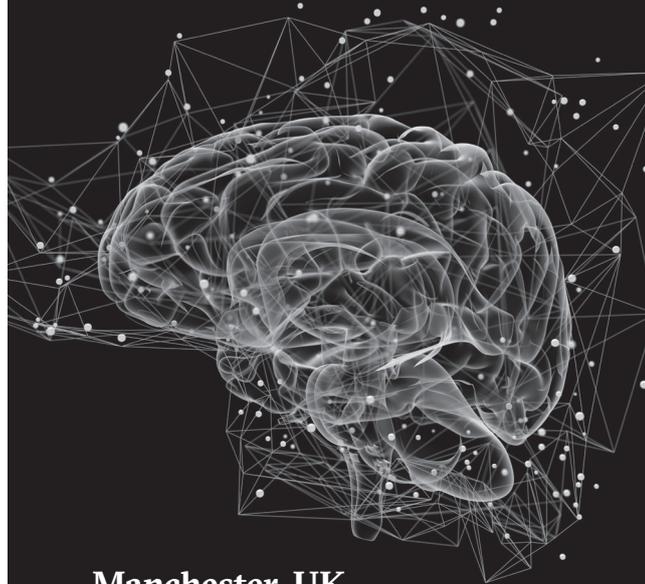
The Korea Foundation invites applications for its field research fellowships. These provide overseas Korean studies scholars and experts with the opportunity to conduct onsite field research in Korea and access resource materials. Fellowships include a stipend worth up to KRW36 million (€28,100) plus return airfare and travel insurance.

**Web id: 205016**

**Email:** yeunpark@kf.or.kr

**Deadline: 31 August 2016** [59]

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## tenders

**Spacecraft monitoring \*ESA**

The European Space Agency invites tenders for the provision of a miniaturised camera for spacecraft health monitoring. The tenderer will design a camera with the goal to minimise mass, volume, power consumption, memory and communication bandwidth. The camera must be designed so it can be installed anywhere in a typical spacecraft, from the main body to the solar panels and to the antennas, from the external surfaces to the internal surfaces. The contract is worth at least €500,000. Ref: 16.163.01. **Deadline: 11 August 2016**

**Multipactor prediction \*ESA**

The European Space Agency invites tenders for multipactor prediction techniques for global navigation satellite system signals. The tenderer will address the development of advanced techniques for prediction of multipactor breakdown in complex radio frequency components under global navigation satellite system modulated signals in support to Galileo second generation activities. The contract is worth at least €500,000. Ref: 16.154.06. **Deadline: 17 August 2016**

**High power amplifiers \*ESA**

The European Space Agency invites tenders for high power amplifiers technology. The tenderer will contribute to the development of high power amplifiers based on gallium nitride technology in support to Galileo second generation activities. The contract is worth at least €500,000. Ref: 16.154.16. **Deadline: 26 August 2016**

**Navigation techniques \*ESA**

The European Space Agency invites tenders for advanced navigation techniques for pinpoint landing. The tenderer will trade-off possible navigation architectures, including hybrid solutions as a function of the required navigation performances. The contract is worth up to €500,000. Ref: 15.1EC.05. **Deadline: 1 September 2016**

**Attitude control sensor \*ESA**

The European Space Agency invites tenders for attitude control sensors. The tenderer will address the development of the new generation infra-red Earth sensor for medium Earth orbit, in support to Galileo second generation activities, including the design, manufacturing and testing of the sensor. The contract is worth at least €500,000. Ref: 16.154.07. **Deadline: 15 September 2016**

**Test user receiver \*ESA**

The European Space Agency invites tenders for European geostationary navigation overlay service test user receiver technologies. The tenderer will address the development of a prototype for future EGNOS test user receiver able to support standardisation, user equations prototyping, assessment of user budgets, feasibility assessments, and to support system aggregate impact value and engineering activities. The contract is worth at least €500,000. Ref: 16.154.11. **Deadline: 16 September 2016**

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

## usa

Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation research grants

**Web id: 187051**

**Deadline: 1 August 2016** [66]

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation an organization to support and strengthen geospatial data in Africa

**Web id: 1190662**

**Deadline: 5 August 2016** [67]

US Department of Defense peer-reviewed cancer research programme – horizon award

**Web id: 1184277**

**Deadline: 17 August 2016** [68]

US Department of Defense psychological health and traumatic brain injury research programme – complex traumatic brain injury rehabilitation research award

**Web id: 1190633**

**Deadline: 17 August 2016** [69]

American Association for Cancer Research minorities in cancer research Jane Cooke Wright memorial lectureship

**Web id: 257499**

**Deadline: 14 September 2016** [70]

Cystic Fibrosis Foundation pilot and feasibility awards

**Web id: 154610**

**Deadline: 14 September 2016** [71]

US Department of Defense prostate cancer research programme – clinical consortium award

**Web id: 1174559**

**Deadline: 15 September 2016** [72]

Social Science Research Council global summer semester residency

**Web id: 1190626**

**Deadline: 19 September 2016** [73]

Social Science Research Council transregional research junior scholar fellowship – interAsian contexts and connections

**Web id: 1190624**

**Deadline: 19 September 2016** [74]

National Academy of Sciences award for scientific reviewing

**Web id: 185043**

**Deadline: 3 October 2016** [75]

University of Notre Dame graduate student fellowships

**Web id: 259569**

**Deadline: 15 October 2016** [76]

American Society of Pharmacognosy Norman R Farnsworth research achievement award

**Web id: 1172372**

**Deadline: 15 February 2017** [77]

American Society of Pharmacognosy research starter grants

**Web id: 1172370**

**Deadline: 15 February 2017** [78]

Association for Computing Machinery/Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Computer Society Eckert-Mauchly award

**Web id: 251798**

**Deadline: 30 March 2017** [79]

Society for Ethnomusicology Ida Halpern fellowship and award

**Web id: 213395**

**Deadline: 1 April 2017** [80]

Association for Computing Machinery Gordon Bell prize

**Web id: 251827**

**Deadline: 15 April 2017** [81]

## policy diary

## July

23 EuroScience Open Forum, Manchester, UK. To 27. <http://rsrch.co/10jv1>

25 Conference on Social Impacts of Science, Barcelona, Spain. To 29. <http://rsrch.co/28Jdo94>

28 Marie-Sklodowska Curie ESO Satellite Event: Research and Society, Manchester, UK. To 29. <http://rsrch.co/1P8jgTc>

## September

5 Symposium on Fusion Technology, Prague, Czech Republic. To 9. <http://rsrch.co/1UkK7B5>

11 International Network of Research Management Societies 2016 Congress, Melbourne, Australia. To 15. <http://rsrch.co/1S7sFe5>

• International Conference on Nuclear Data for Science, Bruges, Belgium. To 16. <http://rsrch.co/28JhDil>

14 Horizon 2020 Infoday: Societal Challenge 5 on Climate Action, Brussels, Belgium. <http://rsrch.co/1q20MNN>

15 Data for Policy Conference, Cambridge, UK. To 16. <http://rsrch.co/1W2ulwD>

21 EuroTech Universities high-level event, Brussels, Belgium. <http://rsrch.co/2913kVw>

28 European Digital Infrastructures for Research Conference, Krakow, Poland. To 30. <http://rsrch.co/28IyqSi>

29 2nd International Conference on Science Advice to Government, Brussels, Belgium. To 30. <http://rsrch.co/28Jhn6P>

• University Governance: Impeding or Facilitating Creativity? Hanover, Germany. To 30. <http://rsrch.co/1S7wHTF>

## October

6 3rd EUA Funding Forum, Porto, Portugal. To 7. <http://rsrch.co/1RLn4uT>

12 EARTO Policy Event and Innovation Awards, Brussels, Belgium. <http://rsrch.co/1X06ZYI>

13 EPC 20th Anniversary Conference, Brussels, Belgium. <http://rsrch.co/1WxUZhg>

26 Re-industrialisation of the EU 2016, Bratislava, Slovenia. To 28. <http://rsrch.co/28JK9TF>

## November

8 Science Meets European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium. <http://rsrch.co/1TZiCnV>

9 Euraxess Careers Workshop, Bratislava, Slovakia. <http://rsrch.co/28JC4io>

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a \*Research publication

# Building a case

The London-based lobby group Sense about Science is branching out to Brussels, as **Craig Nicholson** reports.

"There's a feeling among researchers that speaking to policymakers in Brussels is very difficult, if not impossible," says Sile Lane, director of campaigns and policy at Sense about Science. "People don't know how to get involved."

That is one reason SaS gives for launching its Brussels office, scheduled to open on 18 July. The UK-based group has a mission to "ensure that the public interest in sound science and evidence is recognised in public discussion and policymaking".

SaS was set up in 2002 by Dick Taverne, a maverick centrist politician and keen advocate of genetic modification of crops. SaS receives its funding from a range of public research organisations and private companies, including the UK research councils, learned societies, universities and publishers, it says.

Critics, such as the transparency group LobbyWatch and *Guardian* columnist George Monbiot, have accused SaS of backing pro-business, anti-regulatory policies under the pretence of speaking up for science. But SaS asserts that its Brussels office will bring a fresh perspective to EU science policy.

SaS already claims to have had some European successes. It was involved, for example, in achieving an exemption for researchers from a 2013 EU directive on the use of electromagnetic fields in the workplace. And it supports AllTrials, a campaign that Lane credits with ensuring that an EU directive due to come into effect by 2018 included a requirement for all clinical trials to be registered and their results reported, regardless of the outcome. "We saw that the way we work can be effective in a European context," says Lane.

**NOW IS THE PERFECT MOMENT FOR** SaS to launch an office in Brussels, says Sofie Vanthournout, director of SaS EU, and for the time being its sole member of staff. "People in Brussels are talking about evidence and how to use it," she says.

SaS has a staff of about a dozen in London, but it is already looking for extra funding to hire another person or two to strengthen its Brussels branch. How much bigger than that the office will grow will depend in part on how much interest its work generates, Vanthournout says.

The group says that it aims to open up policymaking. One of its first activities in Brussels will be to launch an EU version of its Ask for Evidence campaign, which uses an online portal to help members of the public request to see the evidence underlying policies, as well as news stories

and marketing claims in the UK. Vanthournout worked for six years as a liaison officer at the Brussels-based European Academies Scientific Advisory Council, which coordinates science advice from national academies for European policymakers. She says that in this

time it became clear to her that something was missing in terms of public representation and even public understanding of science. "The messages that come from citizens aren't the same as the ones that come from evidence providers. Often it's because the public is misinformed, but also it's because the representation of citizens in EU policy is not as it should be," she says.

SaS EU is hoping to address that by helping the public and researchers to question policymakers about their use of evidence, and by amplifying those questions in areas it sees as important. The criteria for that judgement call, Lane says, will include what's at stake, how much of a public-interest case for open policymaking there is, and whether the issue would get attention without SaS's involvement.

SaS EU will identify topics to work on through its own observations and by expanding SaS's existing network of researchers and citizen groups, Lane adds. "Everything relies on that network flagging things up to us, telling us what they're coming across in their daily personal and professional lives. Anybody who cares about evidence in policymaking, get in touch. We need you."

The office will focus mainly on the European Parliament initially, "because that is where citizens have most effect", says Vanthournout. That doesn't mean that it will ignore the European Commission and the European Council, but Vanthournout identifies the Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee as the place where many of the "hot debates" around the use of evidence in policymaking are taking place.

The outcome of the UK's recent referendum on its membership of the EU has not changed SaS's rationale for setting up a Brussels branch, Lane says. She says that she hopes opening up EU policymaking is now high on people's agendas because of the UK's vote to leave, and because of the potential for similar referendums in other EU member states.

Indeed, Lane is concerned that during the UK referendum debate politicians openly criticised and dismissed expertise. "We're trying to rebuild a healthier relationship between politicians, the public and expertise that's not about deference to experts, but about respect for knowledge, evidence and open argument," she says.

*Something to add? Email comment@ResearchResearch.com*

'The messages that come from citizens aren't the same as the ones from evidence providers.'

## uk & ireland

# England's health-care database abandoned due to privacy and consent concerns

The NHS in England has decided to terminate a project to store all patient medical information in a single database.

The project, known as care.data, has been axed following a government-commissioned review of health-data confidentiality and security. The review was carried out by Fiona Caldicott, the UK's national health-data guardian and a former president of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. It was published on 7 July alongside a separate government review of data security in the NHS.

Caldicott found that there were problems with care.data's consent procedures. Specifically, it did not give patients the right to specify who could access their data, although the data would have been anonymised. For example, a patient could not specify that they wanted their data to be available to medical professionals but not businesses. Opting out of the database was also not clearly explained.

In addition, the review highlighted security problems and a lack of information for patients on the benefits of sharing health data, such as for research purposes. As a result, Caldicott recommended that the scheme be paused and that there should be a period of consultation before restarting it.

In a statement, the Department of Health said that it had "taken the decision to close the care.data programme" as its existing framework was unable to provide the opt-outs and safeguards that Caldicott was recommending.

George Freeman, the minister for life sciences, added:

by Anna McKie

amnews@ResearchResearch.com

"To achieve our ambition of a fully digital NHS, it is vital that the public trusts health and care staff to keep their personal data safe and secure."

Freeman commissioned the Caldicott review in September 2015 partly in response to newspaper reports that the data could be sold to companies and also that individuals could be identified.

The scheme's premature ending was greeted with mixed reactions by organisations with an interest in health-care data. In a statement, the Association of Medical Research Charities said: "Recommendations alone cannot build trust, the actions that follow are critical." The health secretary must now hold a "full and comprehensive" consultation on the review, said Aisling Burnand, chief executive of the AMRC.

In contrast, Robert Lechler, president of the Academy of Medical Sciences, welcomed Caldicott's recommendations. He said that if there was to be public support for data being used for research, "we must address any concerns over security and be clear about who can access this data, when and why".

The Wellcome Trust has set up a task force to explore the implications of the review, which will include the UK's research funding councils as well as other clinical research organisations.

## uk & i in brief

### Wellcome to launch its own open-access platform

The Wellcome Trust is to launch an online publishing platform in the autumn. Wellcome Open Research will allow immediate publication of research funded by the trust. In addition to research articles, Wellcome-funded researchers will be able to publish a range of outputs on the platform, from datasets to protocols and software.

### Funding councils look beyond EU for partnerships

Research Councils UK has advised Britain's researchers to forge partnerships outside Europe, while maintaining ties with EU colleagues. In a statement after the UK's referendum vote to leave the EU, RCUK said that it would use its offices in China, India and the United States to identify opportunities for international collaboration.

### Cuts threaten Scotland's 'world-class' research

The agency responsible for auditing Scotland's public institutions is warning that a reduction in funding from the Scottish Funding Council could harm Scotland's global standing in academic research. In a report published

on 7 July, Audit Scotland reported a real-terms reduction of 7 per cent in the funding council's research funding between 2014-15 and 2016-17.

### £1m Newton prize to tackle poverty

The UK government has announced an annual £1-million prize under the Newton Fund for projects that promote economic development. The science minister Jo Johnson announced the launch of the prize on 30 June. The prize will reward the best science or innovation projects promoting economic development and social welfare in Newton Fund partner countries. Projects can also address poverty elsewhere in the world.

### MoD science guides Iraq bombings

Researchers from the Ministry of Defence helped guide the bombing campaign against the so-called Islamic State and were also instrumental in protecting against cyberattacks at home, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory's annual report has said. DSTL chief executive Jonathan Lyle said that its expertise was now being used by the Royal Air Force following the decision to bomb IS-controlled oil fields in Iraq.

# France overhauls €10bn innovation programme

Funding to set up research-focused graduate schools and a €700-million grand-challenges fund for companies are planned in the third wave of the French government's Investments for the Future (PIA) programme.

Prime minister Manuel Valls outlined plans for the PIA scheme in a cabinet meeting on 22 June, and details were published the same day in a document titled *Preparing France for the Challenges of Tomorrow*.

The plan fulfils president François Hollande's promise, made in September 2015, that the third wave of the PIA programme would be worth €10 billion. The PIA scheme was given €35bn in its first round in 2010 and €12bn in 2013, mostly to support the commercialisation of research, although it also funded major projects such as the Astrid nuclear reactor.

Money in the third wave will be split, with €5.9bn going to higher education and research and the rest going to businesses for innovation and modernisation.

The plan includes a consolidation, rather than an extension, of the IDEX and I-site schemes that were focal points of the previous PIA programmes. IDEX aims to bring top French universities up to the standard of the world's most prestigious research institutions, while I-site looks to boost the capabilities of smaller, specialised universities.

A third open competition for universities to benefit from IDEX and I-site has been ruled out, while €700m will

by James Brooks

news@ResearchResearch.com

be given to the schemes' previous winners, which are all built on collaborations, to help with further integration.

New measures include a fund of €300m, to establish "university research schools" following "the German example" and to allow universities to bolster the international attractiveness of their scientific research.

Elsewhere, €400m has been allotted to pilot schemes to create "university research companies" that will generate revenue by providing training opportunities, sharing university facilities with other companies and boosting research commercialisation.

Basic research programmes are also set to benefit, with €750m set aside for the priority research areas of sustainable development, big data and artificial intelligence, and education and health research.

The major novelty for businesses is the creation of a €700m grand-challenges fund, which will aim to provide "massive capital investment to very ambitious entrepreneurial projects from birth". The fund embodies a less risk-averse attitude to investment by the French government, the plan said. It nonetheless stressed that the fund would complement the actions of private investors who "will always predominate".

The plan will be presented to the French parliament, which is expected vote on it before the end of the year.

## nations in brief

### University leaders walk out on government talks

France's university leaders have refused to continue discussions on social obligations with the government and university unions until their 2017 budget allocations have been disclosed. On 5 July, Thierry Mandon, secretary of state for higher education and research, pledged only a "general fiscal effort for research organisations".

### France unveils social-science strategy

The French government has published a strategy outlining 29 measures to boost social-science research. It includes a pledge to double funding for a €150,000 interdisciplinary research programme run by the CNRS, France's largest public research organisation. It also promises to recruit a specialist on interdisciplinary social-science research to HCERES, France's higher education and research evaluation agency.

### Call for national data network

Germany's Council for Scientific Information Infrastructures has advised the federal education ministry to create a national network to manage research data. The proposed network would provide coordination and

common standards, and work to develop solutions for the long-term provision for and archiving of research data. A council report concluded that there was a lack of coordination and too much emphasis on "parallel, project-based initiatives" in German research data management.

### France launches genomes project

The French government has promised €670 million over five years to build the country's capabilities in DNA sequencing and precision medicine. Two-thirds of the money is to come from government and the rest from businesses. A government roadmap outlined the creation of several structures aimed at improving France's precision medicine capacity, including 12 DNA sequencing centres and a dedicated data-analysis centre that would be able to sequence 235,000 genomes a year by 2020.

### Academics prosecuted for criticising Turkish military

Four academics in Turkey are on trial for spreading terrorist propaganda and inciting hatred after they signed a petition calling on the Turkish government to end military activity in Kurdish towns. The Kurdish news agency Rudaw reported that the academics were imprisoned for between three and six weeks prior to the trial. They each face a prison sentence of up to seven and a half years.

**nordic**

## Danish universities call for basic-applied funding gap to be filled in Framework 9

The EU should fund more collaborative research at the stages in between blue-sky research and close-to-market innovation in the next Framework programme, Danish universities have said.

Universities Denmark, which represents the country's eight universities, said that Horizon 2020 has opened up a gap between early-stage research funded by the European Research Council and late-stage research under the societal challenges and industrial leadership pillars.

"This is especially a problem with societal challenges where there is no proper connection between the technologies that are supposed to bring solutions to the market and the ground-breaking research that is a prerequisite for the anticipated solutions," the association said in a position paper on 29 June.

It called for this to be corrected by allocating more EU funding to collaborative research at lower 'technology readiness levels'. The recommendation is one of several intended to feed into the Commission's midterm review of Horizon 2020 and its plans for Framework 9.

Universities Denmark's paper echoes previously-voiced concerns about the position of universities in the Framework programme. "Horizon 2020 has become too

by **Jenny Maukola**

news@ResearchResearch.com

focused on activities close to the market," it said. "It is necessary to strike a better balance between research and innovation to ensure university commitment."

The association acknowledged the need to reduce the participation gap between western and eastern European countries, tipped to be a focus of Framework 9, but said that this should be done "without changing the nature of the research funding". More EU structural funds should be allocated to research to allow Horizon 2020 to continue focusing on excellence, it said. It also suggested looking into the use of loans from the European Investment Bank.

The Commission should continue integrating the social sciences and humanities into Horizon 2020, the paper said. "More often than not, SSH is seen as a sort of add-on consultancy service to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, making it difficult for SSH research to participate and contribute to new solutions."

Overall, universities said that they were happy with the Commission's effort to reduce bureaucracy. However, they requested continued improvements to evaluation processes, including a larger budget for training reviewers.



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# What must Sweden do to regain its standing in the life sciences?

Last month, a non-governmental organisation called Research!Sweden, which is focused on improving conditions for medical research, published its annual report. The picture it painted was of a research environment heading in the wrong direction. Industry spending on R&D decreased by 30 per cent between 2001 and 2014, and public funding declined for the second year in a row.

Anna Nilsson Vindefjärd, founder and general secretary of Research!Sweden, told *Research Europe* that she is worried about Swedish life sciences. "We used to be top two or three in the world, and when you start losing position in research quality, that's a big warning sign," she says. "We're not saying Sweden is out of the game, we are still top in several areas, but we need to fix certain things to regain the top position that we used to have."

Vindefjärd attributes the decline to increased competition from other countries, and to structural problems in Swedish life-sciences research. First, Sweden needs to facilitate collaboration between academia, industry and its health-care system by establishing centres of excellence around expertise in specific diseases, she says. This need not cost the government much money and might attract industry investment in return for access to patients, specialised physicians and academic leadership.

Second, Vindefjärd says that Sweden needs to make it easier for health-care workers to do research, and incentivise them to do so. And she says that the health-care system needs to become more open to test-

**nordic  
outlook**

by Craig Nicholson

cnnews@ResearchResearch.com

ing therapeutic innovations. "We're not a large market, but we have many strengths that make us well suited as a test market for new products," she says.

Karin Meyer, chief executive of the Swedish Pharmaceutical Society, says that Sweden has relied too much on old merits, and hasn't taken enough steps to maintain its competitive edge. Agreeing with the actions suggested in Research!Sweden's report, Meyer says that she would like to see more tax incentives for companies to invest in R&D, and incentives for people to move between academia, health care and industry.

On a more optimistic note, both Vindefjärd and Meyer say that there have been positive signals and actions in recent years: clinical trials have been centralised and the Swedish government has appointed a national coordinator for life sciences, Anders Lönnberg, with whom Vindefjärd has been working.

The litmus test could come in the autumn, when the Swedish government is due to unveil its 10-year research plan for all areas of research. Vindefjärd and Meyer say that they are optimistic that the bill will include some structural measures to improve the life sciences and help the country regain its status as a world leader in this field.

But they also acknowledge that there will be a lot of competition for any extra money. "This government is very keen on improving the position for Sweden as a life-sciences nation. They've put a lot of effort into it," says Vindefjärd. "I just hope they follow through in terms of resources as well."

## nordic in brief

### Windfall for Norway's regional universities

The Norwegian government has announced that it will award 16 million Norwegian kroner (€1.7m) to universities in western and southern Norway for research equipment. The government said that the allocation was prompted by a downturn in the country's oil industry, which it said made it necessary to start investing in long-term restructuring of the economy. The money will go to the universities of Agder, Bergen and Stavanger, as well as the Bergen National Academy and Stord-Haugesund University College.

### Universities splash out at Almedalen

Swedish universities have doubled their spending on hosting public seminars at the annual Almedalen Week political forum, the public service broadcaster SVT has

said. The forum is a gathering of political parties, the public, non-governmental organisations and other institutions, which is held in July on the island of Gotland. Universities spent a total of 5.2 million Swedish kronor (€550,000) on event costs for 2016, up from kr2.8m in 2012. The biggest spenders were the universities of Stockholm, Lund, Uppsala and Gothenburg.

### Denmark sets space agenda

A strategy has been published to set out Denmark's goals and ambitions in space. It covers three themes: increasing the competitiveness of the Danish space industry, having more Danish participation in European space programmes and increasing the quality and efficiency of space research. At the moment, Danes participate in less than 1 per cent of EU space programmes and this level must be increased, the strategy said.

## usa

# Academy slams plan to change ethics rules for human research subjects

A report from the National Academy of Sciences has said that the United States' federal government should scrap its plan to rewrite the ethical guidance for research involving human subjects.

The Department of Health and Human Services issued a proposal in September 2015 to change the guidance, known as the Common Rule, which has not been updated since 1991. The biggest revisions would affect how samples are classified: many more types of specimen, such as blood, would be considered identifiable, a reflection of the new capabilities of technologies such as fast genetic sequencing. That would introduce more restrictions on how researchers could use specimens.

The national academy report recommended that the agency withdraw its proposed rule changes. The report suggested instead that an ethics commission mandated by Congress should consider the questions of privacy that prompted the proposal. Such a commission could then recommend legal and regulatory changes, it said.

"The proposal is marred by omissions, the absence of essential elements, and a lack of clarity. In addi-

by Sam Lemonick

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tion, important questions about the overall impact and long-term costs of the proposed regulatory changes are unresolved," the report said.

It added that the new rules for specimen identification and consent from subjects would pose significant burdens and costs to researchers. The report reiterated the possibility that worrying too much about patient consent—which for some specimens may be decades old—could hamper researchers' ability to ask questions or explore links that a subject may not have agreed to because no one foresaw the possibility at the time.

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and the Association of American Universities said in a statement on 30 June: "Our associations are concerned about the rush to issue a final rule and believe there is no urgency to do so."

The administration and the Department of Health and Human Services have not indicated what action, if any, it will take in response to the recommendations.

## usa in brief

### Clinton wants green cards for STEM graduates

Hilary Clinton, the Democrats' likely presidential nominee, has outlined plans for America's hi-tech industries, including offering permanent residence to science, technology, engineering or mathematics graduates of other nationalities. She also pledged to seek larger budgets for the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

### Marijuana research bill proposed

A bipartisan bill seeking to relax restrictions on marijuana to make it easier for researchers to explore its therapeutic potential has been introduced in the House. The proposed law, introduced by two Democrats and two Republicans, would make it easier to obtain marijuana plants and seeds for research purposes.

### Cancer 'moonshot' to rest on partnerships

The White House has announced some of the first concrete details of its planned cancer research initiative. On 28 June, United States vice-president Joe Biden, who is leading the so-called moonshot, said that it would rely on close cooperation between the government and businesses. The administration said that the National Cancer Institute would make agreements with between 20 and 30 drug companies to make it easier to access experimental drugs for trials.

### Zika funds stuck in Senate

Democrats in the Senate have voted against a \$1.1-billion Zika virus response bill that they once supported, saying that provisions added by Republicans have made it impossible to support. Without an agreement, the additional funding for Zika research and prevention will not be approved until early September, when Congress returns from recess. It is not clear that a further compromise will be found, even then.

### Lab safety procedures criticised

An external investigation of an accident at the University of Hawaii, Manoa, has found that a build-up of static charge set off an explosion in which a researcher was severely injured. The University of California's Center for Laboratory Safety said that there had been neglect in noticing or addressing safety issues at the lab. It said that poor lab safety culture was not unique to Manoa but a problem at many American universities.

### Senate committee passes research bill

The Senate commerce committee has approved legislation that would set a ceiling on the National Science Foundation budget of \$7.5 billion in the fiscal year 2017 and \$7.8bn in 2018. The bill—an update to the America COMPETES Act, which expired in 2013—would validate the NSF's peer-review system. Final budgets for the NSF and other agencies are set by appropriations committees under a separate, annual process.

# Scientists demand end to online peer review

More than 1,000 researchers have called on the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to suspend the roll-out of its online peer-review system and reinstate face-to-face meetings of review panels.

The researchers signed a letter to federal health minister Jane Philpott, dated 27 June, in which they voiced alarm at how the first use of the online system to review applications for CIHR's Project Grants scheme was turning out.

The agency scrambled to find enough reviewers, and some of those recruited were later deemed not to be sufficiently qualified, the researchers said. The agency was late in sending applications to reviewers and about 15 per cent of reviews were not submitted by the deadline. Meanwhile, those tasked with guiding the process complained of poor quality reviews and said some reviewers did not take part in online discussions.

"The new processes have injected unpredictability, causing widespread lack of confidence in the review process and the agency itself," said the letter, organised by Jim Woodgett, director of the Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute in Toronto. "There is little hope that the best ideas and projects will be funded. We posit this represents a fundamental failure of CIHR's primary mandate."

In May, feedback from the pilot round of one grant

by Brian Owens

news@ResearchResearch.com

programme highlighted concerns that online peer-review could disadvantage early-career scientists, leading the CIHR to conclude that separate assessments for different career stages was necessary.

For its Project Grants scheme, the agency has not entirely abandoned face-to-face meetings. On the basis of criticisms aired in 2015, the funder has maintained a second stage of committee meetings to discuss 'grey zone' applications, particularly those with large discrepancies in scores from reviewers following online assessment.

The CIHR has also said that it will continue to refine and improve the online process for future competitions.

However, researchers say that because funding has been tight lately and some competitions were cancelled, the vast majority of them have had to apply to this round, so any problems will have huge consequences.

The letter calls for the CIHR to immediately return to face-to-face expert panel reviews for the next competition, scheduled for this winter.

"There is much at stake for far too many of our colleagues to endure another episode of this failed experiment," the letter said.

## world in brief

### IT chiefs struggle to keep academics up to date

Helping university staff master emerging technologies has been rated as one of the biggest IT problems by Australia's universities. A report by the Council of Australian University Directors of IT also said cybersecurity, student learning support and the development of institutional strategies for IT were important challenges. Providing research support was ranked much lower than in previous surveys.

### Agency tries to bridge online learning divide

Unesco has published a guide to encourage developing nations to increase their provision of Massive Open Online Courses. Many governments and institutions in the development world are unaware of the potential of Moocs, it said, leading to a dominance of institutions from the developed world in providing the courses. The guide called for a change to the existing model for Moocs to take into account different conditions in developing countries, such as limited internet access.

### Science minister survives Modi cabinet shake-up

Harsh Vardhan is to continue as India's science minister, after prime minister Narendra Modi announced a long-awaited reshuffle on 5 July. Vardhan, a former health minister and member of the centre-right Bharatiya Janata Party, was one of only a handful of ministers to

stay in position. Yalamanchili Satyanarayana Chowdary will remain as junior minister on the science portfolio.

### Work starts on robotic research ship

China has commissioned a 100-metre long, fully automated marine science ship, the country's State Oceanic Administration has announced. The vessel, named Xiang Yang Hong 01, will be built to be operable by a single crew member, the news site China Topix reported on 28 June. It will conduct its first research trip in the Indian Ocean.

### Canada plans science review

The Council of Canadian Academies has launched an assessment of the state of science, technology, and industrial R&D in Canada at the request of the federal government. An interim report will be released in late 2016, with the final report in 2017. This will be the third assessment of Canada's science and technology by the council in the past decade, following reviews in 2006 and 2012.

### Sweden funds Unesco transparency site upgrade

Unesco has secured 1.5 million Swedish kronor (€160,000) to improve a website that publishes data on Unesco programmes and grants. The Swedish government awarded the money to fund improvements to the agency's Transparency Portal. The upgrade is part of a wider move by the agency to improve accountability and transparency, following criticism of its operations.

**NEVER TOO MUCH** Organisers of the EuroScience Open Forum conference in Manchester on 23-27 July have decided to make the most of Robert-Jan Smits, head of the European Commission's directorate-general for research and innovation. Smits, who is normally based in Brussels, will take his cue from Manchester's history as the birthplace of the industrial revolution by making no fewer than four keynote speeches. Come the 27th, the assertion that a conference speaker "needs no introduction" will never have been more true.

**GAMING THE SYSTEM** A paper in July's edition of the *Journal of Experimental and Theoretical Artificial Intelligence* proposes a remarkably simple way for machines to pass the Turing test: simply remain quiet when engaged in conversation. "If a machine were to take the Fifth Amendment—that is, exercise the right to remain silent throughout the test—it could, potentially, pass the test and thus be regarded as a thinking entity," the authors conclude. Better to remain silent and be suspected a robot than to speak out and remove all doubt?

**EMINENTLY QUALIFIED** As Brexit woes reached saturation point last week, a notorious Lithuanian MEP known as Tony G provided some light relief. Presenting an application to become the next leader of the UK Independence Party, the former poker player said that he was an excel-

lent candidate for the position. He emphasised his "loss of income to Romanians", having once lost a substantial sum to Romanian poker player Daniel Negreanu, and poker players' preference for leaving the table after a big win, referring to the much-derided departure of Vote Leave members from the political scene post-vote.

**HEDGE FUND** Another EU figure who has been trying his hand at games of chance is European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker. Although Juncker said after the referendum that he was "saddened by the British vote", there was an upside for him. He revealed in an interview with the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*: "I put my money on Brexit. The EU financial stability commissioner, Jonathan Hill from Britain, still owes me a pound."

**LAID TO REST** In these troubled times for the European project, a reminder of our shared values has come from an unlikely source. Ten feet beneath the Israeli port city of Ashkelon, archaeologists uncovered a 3,000-year-old burial ground of the Philistines, a civilisation best-known for lending its name to a put-down for the supposedly uncultured. Decorated jugs and jewellery were found among the graves, prompting dig leader Lawrence Stager of Harvard University to describe the Philistines as "elegant and worldly". Instead of casting around for a replacement term, why don't we all try to be just a little less judgmental?



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