

## Science groups vie to speak for EU science

European science organisations are attempting to strengthen their influence on the development of science policy, amid a debate over who speaks for science in Europe.

The European Science Foundation last week announced changes to its governing council, which directs its overall strategy, restricting membership to the heads of its member organisations. It also approved a plan to create a science advisory board and is reviewing its membership after complaints that the foundation is not delivering what members want. Some members, such as the UK's Royal Society, are threatening to leave.

The ESF is also trying to clarify its role in existing initiatives. It voiced concern at a meeting with Fotis Kafatos, head of the European Research Council, last month that the ERC's Starting Independent Research grants overlap with its own European Young Investigators scheme. The ESF is also due to meet Janez Potocnik, the Research Commissioner, to discuss the ERA-NET scheme, which coordinates national and regional research programmes. ESF says ERA-NETs are similar to its initiatives aimed at building links between scientists.

Ian Halliday, ESF president, said the moves were aimed at giving the foundation a stronger voice in policy debates and come amid a debate over which science organisations carry weight with policymakers.

"The idea is to strengthen the role of science to give it a more focused voice. We want to position the ESF to give dispassionate advice," said Halliday. "What I'd really like

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to do is set up a system in which we are seen as the people who get all the voices listened to."

"There are a lot of people out there trying to articulate different views, of whom one is the ESF. There is a bigger question in Europe about who is credible and who is not," he added. "There is a slight feeling the Commission is drowning in advice at times. The question is can we make all these people talk to each other so the advice is more focused."

The European Heads of Research Councils, EuroHORCS, is organising a meeting on 15 December in The Hague, called for in part by the Commission, to discuss how science bodies can work together to develop a common agenda in achieving the European Research Area.

EuroHORCS is also undergoing governance changes. Peter Nijkamp, its president, said the organisation will in future have two vice presidents, one from an organisation that carries out research, to give "greater balance".

"We have found that the agendas of research funders and performers have more in common now than they did in the past," he said. Both points of view need to be taken into account to improve European research, he added.

Nijkamp said EuroHORCS feels the ESF still has "sufficient credit" to continue to coordinate initiatives such as COST, which supports coordination between scientists.

### europe in brief

#### Commission honours clusters

The Commission has awarded the inaugural Europe INNOVA cluster awards to Dusan Busen of the Slovenian Automotive Cluster and Herbert Ortner of the Eco Energy Cluster in Austria. The awards recognise excellence in the management of research clusters.

#### MEDEA+ calls for more technology funding

Europe needs to strengthen both public and private technology research programmes if it is to "be in control of its own destiny", MEDEA+, an industry led programme for R&D in microelectronics, has said.

MEDEA+ started in 2001 under the umbrella of EUREKA, the European network for collaborative R&D. It plans to produce a white paper on a successor programme, Beyond MEDEA+, by the middle of next year.

#### Austrian political scientist wins Latsis prize

The winner of this year's Latsis Prize has been named as Rainer Bauböck from the Institute of European Integration Research in Austria. The 65,000 euro prize is awarded annually by the European Science Foundation

to the individual or group considered to have made the greatest contribution to a named field of European research, which this year was integration and cohesion in modern societies. Bauböck plans to use part of the prize to encourage researchers to study migration.

#### Commission approves state aid for BioHub

The Commission has approved 41.8 million euros in French state aid for the Agency for Industrial Innovation's BioHub R&D programme. The project involves companies and research laboratories from France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, led by French starch supplier Roquette. It aims to develop new green chemical products from renewable raw materials.

#### Hebrew University is Israel's top EU grant winner

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem has won more research grants from the EU than any other institution in Israel, new figures show. In Framework 6, the university was granted 26 million euros. The figures were published in a booklet produced by ISERD, the Israeli Directorate for the Framework programme, which aims to promote research collaboration between the EU and Israel.