

Research: €9 billion injection to boost European ICT research

The EU plans to invest over €9 billion in research on information and communications technologies (ICTs). This is, by far, the largest single budget item in Europe's 7th research framework programme that will run until 2013 – a priority set by the EU, acknowledging the importance of ICTs for Europe's growth and competitiveness. To discuss the new research framework programme and the strategic priorities for fundamental and applied ICT research for the future, nearly 3500 members of the research community are gathering today in Helsinki for the "Information Society Technology 2006" conference and exhibition.

"Europe is starting to catch up in ICT research," said Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media. "By investing heavily in collaborative ICT research projects, the Commission is giving a much-needed shot in the arm to European ICT research. With €9 billion we're challenging Member States, industry and academia to join us in the fight for a more competitive Europe. But we don't just need more research; we need better focussed research too. To get our priorities right, we have relied heavily on the advice of nine European Technology Platforms in ICTs. In some areas we shall take this partnership a step further and pool resources in Joint Technology Initiatives."

ICT is the largest single research area within the EU's seven-year 7th Framework Programme (FP7) for research and development, accounting for 18% of the total Community budget. The ICT research work programme for 2007-2008, that is discussed today by the research community in Helsinki, marks the start of the FP7 and will bring on stream a new generation of ICT projects that will raise Europe's research performance and help keep the European ICT sector at the forefront of technology development and advanced ICT use. Researchers will hear in Helsinki what to expect from the first, and largest ever (€1140m), call for proposals, the selection procedure for receiving FP7 funds.

This figure underlines the EU's determination to close the research gap between Europe and its global competitors. A 2006 survey of the top 1250 R&D-active companies in the world found that 39 of the top 100 were US companies and 36 were European, underlining how Europe is catching up. Hardware technology, electronics and electrical, and software were the first, fourth and fifth largest sectors respectively of global research expenditure.

The work programme will focus on key areas where Europe has competitive advantages and established strengths: communications, electronics and photonics, and software systems and architecture. It will also aim to ensure that ICT research benefits not only the European economy but also society by improving everyday life in areas such as transport, energy efficiency and healthcare.

The Helsinki event will also allow the Commission to pursue its cooperation with European Technology Platforms (ETPs) active in ICTs which, through their industry-led Strategic Research Agendas, have contributed significantly to the focus of the new work programme. ETPs aim to speed up innovation, in particular by building consensus around technology development strategies. They are poles for attracting more research investment and help transfer new technologies to the market. Nine ICT European Technology Platforms have been launched (see [MEMO/06/331](#)).

Two of these ETPs will provide the basis of Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs), in which, for the first time ever, EU, Member State and industry funds will be pooled in public-private research partnerships to boost European cutting-edge research in the vital areas of nanoelectronics and embedded systems, electronic systems built into other devices – a vital area for competitiveness in the automotive sector, for example. The embedded systems JTI, ARTEMIS (see [IP/06/1589](#)), was recently signalled by European Ministers as being of strategic importance for Europe's economy and should start as soon as possible.

Press pack :

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