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I. EU Competitiveness

1. SMEs 'quick path to market' for innovation

In short:

A leading French expert in technology transfer has highlighted research partnerships with SMEs as an efficient way to bring innovative new products to market. In an interview with EurActiv, Dr Bruno Sportisse, from the French National Institute for Research in Computer Science and Control (INRIA), said working with SMEs may be challenging but can have a major impact.

"Our target is to ensure that we have maximal impact with what we do. We think SMEs could be a very quick path to the market, and working with lots of SMEs will increase our economic impact," said Sportisse, director of the technology transfer and innovation department at INRIA.

Sportisse said INRIA had stepped up its partnerships with smaller firms, but it could be difficult to select the right companies to work with. "It is easy to identify big companies – there are, let's say, about 10 potential strategic partners in our sector. It's much more difficult with SMEs. In France, we can estimate that there are thousands of innovative companies," he said.

More on: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/innovation/smes-quick-path-market-innovation/article-181341>

2. Irish SMEs get €500,000 aid boost

In short:

The European Commission has sanctioned a temporary scheme which will allow the Irish government to grant aid to struggling businesses.

The proposal for an Enterprise Stabilisation Fund was revealed in an emergency budget last week, but concerns were raised that it might contravene state aid rules.

The Irish authorities may grant aid of up to €500,000 per firm in 2009 and 2010 to businesses facing problems as a result of the credit crunch. The aid will take the form of direct grants, reimbursable grants, and interest rate subsidies and subsidised public loans.

More on: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enterprise-jobs/irish-smes-get-500000-aid-boost/article-181304>

3. Potočník: Europe must lead 'green revolution'

In short:

The EU will invest billions in green technologies using a series of public private partnerships (PPPs), Janez Potočník, Commissioner responsible for Science and Research, has said in an interview with EurActiv Slovakia.

Potočník said clean technologies, biotechnology and nanotechnology will be as crucial for the economy as ICT was in the 1990s.

"The EU must not miss this opportunity. We have to be the champion of the third industrial revolution, the green revolution," he said.

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Last week he met with industry leaders in Brussels and agreed that a series of "smart investments" funded through PPPs are essential to the future competitiveness of European business.

More on: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/potocnik-europe-lead-green-revolution/article-181223>

4. EU stimulus plan to include funds for energy savings

In short:

After weeks of wrangling, EU lawmakers and member-state representatives have struck an agreement on a €5 billion European recovery plan, which will include substantial funding for energy projects considered vital to Europe's security of supply.

At their meeting on 16 April, the Czech EU Presidency and the Parliament's negotiators endorsed the list of eligible projects agreed by EU heads of state and government in March.

The plan, which initially reserved funds for flagship initiatives on offshore wind or the Nabucco gas pipeline, will now also be open to energy-efficiency measures, meeting one of the key demands from MEPs.

The plan's revised version allocates €3.98 billion to energy projects designed to stimulate job creation, help the EU out of recession and strengthen the bloc's energy independence.

More on: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy-efficiency/eu-stimulus-plan-include-funds-energy-savings/article-181372>

II. Other

1. Brazil Competitiveness Report: how to unleash the country's full competitiveness potential

In short:

The World Economic Forum released on 16 April 'The Brazil Competitiveness Report 2009', the first ever study of this type for Brazil. The findings of the Report are being presented and discussed at the World Economic Forum on Latin America in Rio de Janeiro. The Report is the result of collaboration between the World Economic Forum and Fundação Dom Cabral.

Using the Global Competitiveness Index's methodology and the latest thinking in competitiveness research, The Brazil Competitiveness Report 2009 provides a comprehensive overview of the country's current competitiveness landscape, highlighting strengths and problematic areas. Ranked 64th in the Global Competitiveness Index 2008-2009, Brazil posted a remarkable eight-place improvement since last year, with progress experienced in the institutional environment and labour and financial market efficiency, among others. The Report finds that weaknesses remain in the macroeconomic environment, institutions and goods and labour markets, while notable strengths are its market size as well as its sophisticated and innovative business sector.

More on: http://www.weforum.org/en/media/Latest%20Press%20Releases/PR_Rio09_BCR