

# EU Sets its Scientists Free

Phil Green

In a major funding initiative announced yesterday, European scientists will be given the freedom to follow their own research agendas rather than work to programmes devised by the EC.

The \*\*\* euro 'Framework 8' programme, to run from 2015 to 2023, will support some 2000 of Europe's best research groups with grants of up to 1M Euros per year, with no strings attached. A senior spokesman said

'Since the mid-1980s we have been trying to direct European research towards short-term aims and commercial exploitation. We have demanded collaboration across different countries, and between academia and industry. Following the success of the European research council in framework 7, we now recognise that much of this activity has been mis-directed.

Though this kind of work has its place, the effort involved in writing the complex proposals is a waste of the most valuable resource we have - the scholarship and ingenuity of our scientific community. The old-style funding will amount to no more than 10% of the framework 8 budget.

'We have made matters worse with impenetrable contracts, rigid financial arrangements and demanding reporting regimes which have left too little time for the actual research.

In framework 8 we will, on the basis of peer review, give our best research groups the means to pursue their scientific goals and to hire and train the cream of new talent. We will fund these groups well for a minimum of 5 years, subject only to informal scientific review. If there is the opportunity for exploitation we will provide support for it but we won't demand it.'