

POLICY

European research

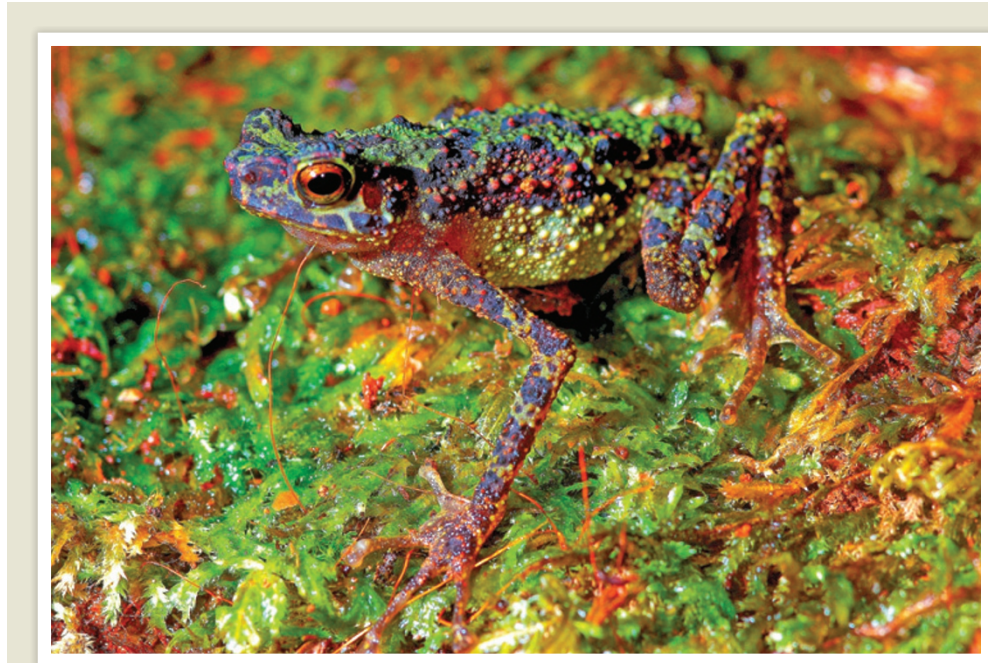
The European Research Council (ERC), a granting agency for basic research, should remain part of the European Commission, according to a report published on 12 July by a commission task force. But the council's governance should change to allow the ERC to side-step burdensome commission bureaucracy, such as demands for detailed time sheets and auditing. The task force recommends that the ERC appoints a near-full-time president, based in Brussels, and makes its governing body, the Scientific Council, more powerful. The ERC launched in 2007 and has so far distributed more than €3 billion (US\$4.2 billion) to top researchers around Europe.

Efficient ships

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has approved internationally binding energy-efficiency standards for ships — the world's first such regulations for any industry. Adopted during a meeting at IMO headquarters in London on 15–19 July, the regulations require a 10% increase in energy efficiency for ships of more than 400 tonnes built between 2015 and 2019, rising to 30% for ships built after 2024. Environmental groups expressed cautious optimism, but criticized loopholes that could allow developing countries to delay implementation by several years.

Fisheries reform

The European Commission on 13 July published plans to overhaul Europe's fishing industry. The commission wants to cut catch quotas to



I. DAS

Technicolour toad caught on camera

The striking Bornean rainbow toad (*Ansonia latidisca*; pictured) has been seen for the first time since the 1920s — and this time, it has been caught on camera. The non-profit group Conservation International, headquartered

in Arlington, Virginia, released the image on 14 July. The group announced that the species had been rediscovered in Malaysia late last year by a team led by Indraneil Das from Malaysia Sarawak University (UNIMAS).

sustainable levels by 2015. It also hopes to ban the practice of throwing away the unwanted by-catch. Critics worry that European member states will not be required to heed scientists' advice on catch quotas. See go.nature.com/plwhgk for more.

Carbon capture

A keenly watched US project to capture and bury carbon dioxide has been put on hold. American Electric Power of Columbus, Ohio, had been granted US\$334 million from the Department of Energy to help capture carbon dioxide from its Mountaineer coal-fired power plant in New Haven, West Virginia, and to sequester around 1.5 million tonnes of the

gas underground each year. On 14 July the company suspended the project, citing the weak economy and the uncertain status of US climate policy.

Nuclear-free Japan

Japan's prime minister Naoto Kan has urged his country to cut its nuclear dependency in the wake of the Fukushima disaster. In a televised news conference on 13 July, he said Japan's aim should be to manage without nuclear power — but didn't say when.

US nuclear safety

A task force appointed by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission has suggested a range of improvements to safety requirements for the

country's nuclear reactors — targeting everything from power outages, flooding and earthquakes to issues of emergency preparedness and the cooling of spent-fuel storage pools. The commission must now decide how, whether and when to implement the recommendations, which were issued on 13 July. See go.nature.com/15x8r2 for more.

Tuition hikes

Universities in California have raised tuition fees — again — in response to more cuts in state funds. On 12 July, the 23-campus California State University system increased fees by 12% for this autumn, on top of an existing 10% rise that had been approved last

NASA/JPL-CALTECH/UCLA/MPFS/DLR/IDA
 November. Two days later, the 10-campus University of California agreed a 9.6% increase, adding to an 8% hike that it had already approved, also last November. The university systems are each facing \$650-million cuts in state funds this year (see *Nature* 475, 10; 2011).

Whaling failure

This year's meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) ended acrimoniously after attendees walked out of the conference in St Helier, Jersey, on its final day, 14 July. The stumbling block was a years-old proposal to create a sanctuary for whales in the south Atlantic. Japan and other pro-whaling nations said that they didn't want to vote on the issue, because "reverting to voting could be harmful to the constructive dialogue and atmosphere in the Commission", the IWC reported. The countries' delegates then left, and the vote was shelved until next year's meeting.

RESEARCH

Asteroid tour

NASA's Dawn spacecraft has entered orbit around Vesta, which sits in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter (pictured). At 500 kilometres in width, it is the second-largest



asteroid in the Solar System, with a geological structure apparently like that of a miniature Earth: a metallic core, and rocky mantle and crust (see *Nature* 475, 147–148; 2011). Dawn, which launched in September 2007, will spend a year touring Vesta before firing up its ion engines to reach the largest asteroid, Ceres, in 2015.

Stem-cell trials

The world's second and third clinical trials of therapies using human embryonic stem cells have begun. Advanced Cell Technology, based in Santa Monica, California, said last week that the first subjects in each of its trials were treated on 12 July. One trial is for a rare cause of blindness — Stargardt disease, which usually strikes in childhood. The other is for a more common cause — age-related macular degeneration. Both are safety studies. The first stem-cell trial, a safety study for a

spinal-cord injury therapy by Geron of Menlo Park, California, started in October 2010. See go.nature.com/yfjtwk for more.

Radio record

A Russian radio telescope that launched from Baikonur, Kazakhstan, on 18 July, is orbiting Earth at about 90% of the distance to the Moon, reports Roscosmos, the Russian space agency. That distance allows the Spectrum-R instrument, also known as RadioAstron, to create extremely high-resolution images by combining its own observations with those from telescopes based on Earth. The effective size of the 'dish' made by the combination will be more than ten times that created in the same way by the Japanese radio telescope HALCA, which orbited Earth from 1997 to 2005.

HIV prevention

Giving antiretroviral drugs to HIV-negative people is an effective way of preventing HIV infection, two teams behind clinical trials in Africa reported at the meeting of the International AIDS society in Rome on 17–20 July. The TDF2 trial on more than 1,200 uninfected heterosexuals in Botswana was found to cut the risk of HIV infection by up to 78%. And the Partners

COMING UP

26 JULY

The US National Institutes of Health discovers how much Republicans in the US House of Representatives want to lop from its 2012 budget. In recent weeks, heavy cuts have been proposed for a number of US science agencies.

PrEP trial, on around 4,750 heterosexuals in Kenya and Uganda, reduced the chance of infection by up to 73%. See go.nature.com/bdfsci for more.

GM crop vandals

Three Greenpeace activists broke into a scientific farm near Canberra overnight on 14 July and destroyed a crop of genetically modified wheat. The crop — engineered to have a lower glycaemic index, so releasing glucose more gradually, and a higher fibre content — was a field trial by Australia's national science agency, the CSIRO. See go.nature.com/ie5wv4 for more.

PEOPLE

Hawass fired

Zahi Hawass, Egypt's antiquities minister, has lost his post. The move is part of a cabinet reshuffle to appease critics of the current government, which has retained many officials who were part of the regime of former president Hosni Mubarak. Hawass, a prominent archaeologist, was appointed minister of state for antiquities in the dying days of Mubarak's tenure. He quit in March — but was reappointed within a month. A permanent replacement had not been confirmed as *Nature* went to press.

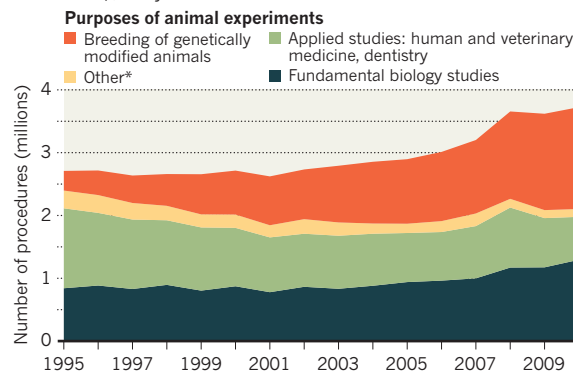
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TREND WATCH

The number of genetically modified animals — particularly mice — being bred for research in the United Kingdom rose by 6% from 2009 to 2010, continuing on from last year's rise of 10%. The increase was largely responsible for the greater number of procedures using animals in UK research reported by the Home Office on 13 July (see chart). Experiments on zebrafish also rose, although fewer cats, dogs and horses were used than last year. See go.nature.com/cegyina for more.

ANIMAL USE RISES IN UK RESEARCH

The number of procedures performed on animals in UK research increased 3% last year to 3.7 million.



*Disease diagnosis; forensic enquiries; education & training; protection of humans, other animals or the environment.

SOURCE: UK HOME OFFICE