

POLICY

European data law

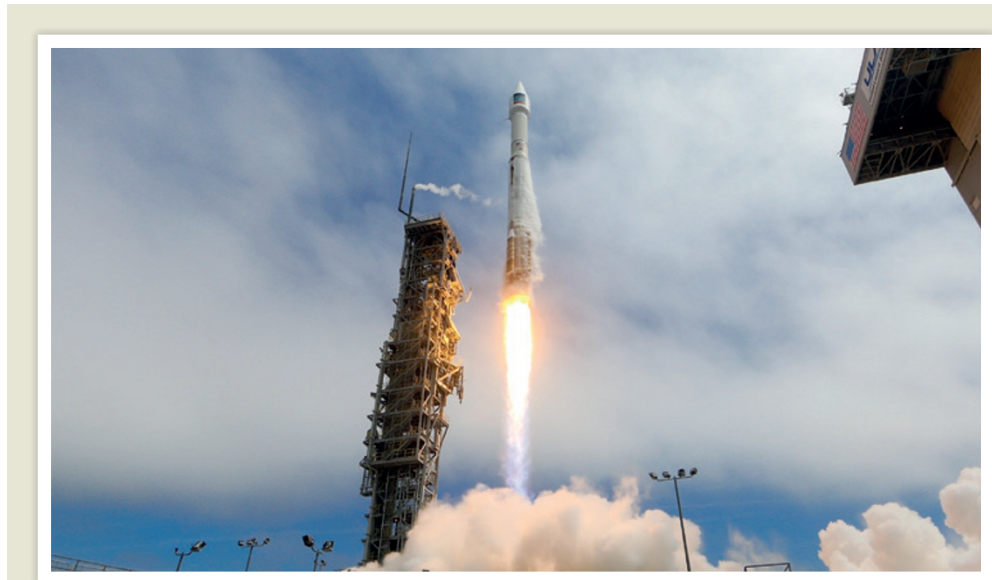
Proposed amendments to the law that regulates the use of personal data in the European Union will stifle research, warned leading research organizations in an open letter on 12 August (see go.nature.com/jchze8). The letter argues that the changes would make the law too heavy-handed in its requirements for individual consent for the use of personal data in research, and “would limit our ability to ensure European policy making is informed by the most robust evidence base”. Negotiations on the legislation, which is expected to be finalized by the end of the year, are reaching their final stages.

Forest threat

Changes in Indonesia’s government could put the country’s progress in forest protection at risk, says an 18 August report from the Norwegian government. In 2010, Norway — the largest funder of the United Nations’ Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) programme — pledged US\$1 billion to help protect Indonesia’s forests. Indonesia recently overtook Brazil to have the world’s highest rate of deforestation.

Endangered species

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has dropped its bid to protect wolverines (*Gulo gulo*) under the Endangered Species Act. Wolverines inhabit snow-covered areas, including mountains; the agency last year proposed to list the species as being endangered by the effects of climate change on its habitat. On 12 August, the service announced that it was withdrawing the proposal, saying that “climate change



PATRICK H. CORKERY/LOCKHEED MARTIN CORPORATION/UNITED LAUNCH ALLIANCE

Satellite brings Earth into focus

A commercial satellite that will produce the sharpest images of Earth yet was launched on 13 August by DigitalGlobe, a company in Longmont, Colorado. The WorldView-3 satellite will image the planet at a resolution of 31 centimetres per pixel. The company previously had to limit the images it sells to consumers to 50-centimetre resolution, until the US Department of Commerce relaxed its

rules in June to allow the sale of images with 25-centimetre resolution. The move means that Earth imaging will finally catch up with that of Mars — NASA’s Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter has been capturing the red planet at a similar resolution to WorldView-3’s since 2006. The improved imagery will enable more-precise mapping of farmland and forests, and will help mining and oil companies in exploration.

models are unable to reliably predict snowfall amounts and snow-cover persistence in wolverine denning locations”. Polar bears and two types of ice-dwelling seal are the only animals listed because of the impacts of climate change.

EVENTS

Ebola crisis

The Ebola epidemic in West Africa has worsened. As of 16 August, 1,229 deaths had been reported in Guinea, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone, but the World Health Organization (WHO) said that is probably an underestimate. On 16 August, a mob attacked a quarantine centre in Monrovia, Liberia. Meanwhile,

the Canadian government said that it would donate hundreds of doses of an experimental vaccine to the WHO for use in West Africa, and three infected Liberian health workers were given a different experimental treatment called ZMapp. The WHO concluded that it is ethical to use unproven drugs against Ebola, but warned against “unrealistic expectations”. See page 233 for more.

Researcher suicide

A suicide note left by a leading Japanese stem-cell researcher says that a media onslaught around the retraction of two papers that he co-authored led him to take his own life on 5 August, a lawyer for

his family said in a press conference on 12 August. Yoshiki Sasai was a renowned scientist at the RIKEN Center for Developmental Biology in Kobe, Japan. He co-authored two ostensibly groundbreaking papers that were published in *Nature* in January, but retracted in July after problems with the data emerged. A RIKEN investigation committee had found Sasai to hold “grave responsibility” for poor oversight of the work, but concluded that he was innocent of involvement with the problematic data. It found the papers’ lead author, Haruko Obokata, guilty of misconduct. See go.nature.com/2godrn for more.

IMU

FACILITIES

Research ship

Australia's purpose-built research vessel, *Investigator*, will leave a shipyard in Singapore on 25 August for its home port of Hobart in Tasmania. Officials from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) took possession of the Aus\$122-million (US\$113-million) ship on 4 August, months later than expected owing to construction delays.

Investigator can accommodate up to 40 scientists and will venture farther south than its predecessor, *Southern Surveyor*. But budget cuts at CSIRO mean that the ship will operate for only 180 days a year, rather than the 300 days researchers had hoped for.



University in California, won for her work on “the dynamics and geometry of Riemann surfaces and their moduli spaces”. The three other medallists are Manjul Bhargava of Princeton University in New Jersey, Martin Hairer of the University of Warwick, UK, and Artur Avila of the Institute of Mathematics of Jussieu in Paris. See go.nature.com/sklvtd for more.

AWARDS

Fields medals

Mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani (pictured) became the first woman to win a Fields Medal, the highest honour in mathematics. The International Mathematical Union revealed the four 2014 medal winners on 12 August. Fields medals, which each come with a Can\$15,000 (US\$13,700) prize — are awarded every four years to researchers aged 40 or younger. Mirzakhani, who is at Stanford

RESEARCH

Costs of misconduct

Scientific misconduct has wasted around US\$58 million of funding from the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) between 1992 and 2012, according to a study published on 14 August (A. M. Stern *et al.* *eLife* 3, e02956; 2014). Ferric Fang from the University of Washington, Seattle, and his colleagues estimated the cost by adding up grants that funded papers that were

retracted for misconduct, and grants to authors censured for misconduct by the Office of Research Integrity. The total is less than 1% of the NIH budget over the 20 years.

Reef under threat

The outlook is poor for the iconic Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Queensland, Australia, according to a report released last week. Climate change is the greatest threat, as rising sea temperatures increase the risk of coral bleaching and water becomes more acidic. Nutrient and pesticide pollution from land, overfishing and destruction of coastal habitat continue to be problems, says the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. In April, the reef narrowly missed being listed as ‘in danger’ when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) considered the conservation status of its world heritage sites.

Tobacco control

European legislation to regulate tobacco was shaped by the tobacco industry, according to a study published on 13 August (H. Costa *et al.* *Tob. Control* <http://doi.org/t75>; 2014). Researchers scrutinized draft texts of proposed revisions to Europe's tobacco-regulation law and found that changes to texts between

2010 and 2013 resembled statements from the tobacco industry much more closely than those of health groups. Aggressive lobbying from the industry was “associated with significant policy shifts” towards the tobacco industry, such as the scaling back of proposed limits on where cigarettes could be sold, the paper adds. The revised legislation was adopted in March 2014.

FUNDING

BRAIN grants

On 18 August, the US National Science Foundation awarded 36 small grants totalling US\$10.8 million to projects in President Barack Obama's Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative. The agency originally planned to fund about 12 grants, but decided to triple that number after receiving nearly 600 applications. Selected projects include models that help computers to recognize different parts of and patterns in the brain. Nearly all projects were awarded the maximum amount of \$300,000 over two years. See go.nature.com/qwhwld for more.

BUSINESS

Insomnia drug

The US Food and Drug Administration approved on 13 August the first drug for insomnia that works by interfering with the signalling of neurotransmitters called orexins, which regulate wakefulness. The drug, called suvorexant (Belsomra), is made by Merck of Whitehouse Station in New Jersey, and will be available in four strengths. The company had originally petitioned for approval of higher doses, but was rebuffed last year by regulators amid concerns about the risk of next-day drowsiness.

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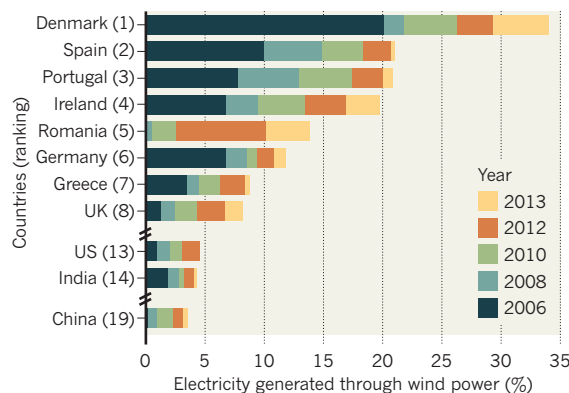
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TREND WATCH

China and the United States have the greatest installed wind-power capacity of any country, according to an 18 August report from the US Department of Energy. But the United States added just 1.1 gigawatts last year, placing it sixth in annual growth. The United States ranks even lower in terms of how much of the energy that it consumes comes from wind power (see graph). US firms had little motivation to finish plants in 2013 because projects only had to start construction by the year's end to qualify for tax credits.

BETTING ON WIND POWER

Denmark has been generating a greater proportion of its electricity through wind power than most other countries for several years.



SOURCE: US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY