

POLICY

European tension

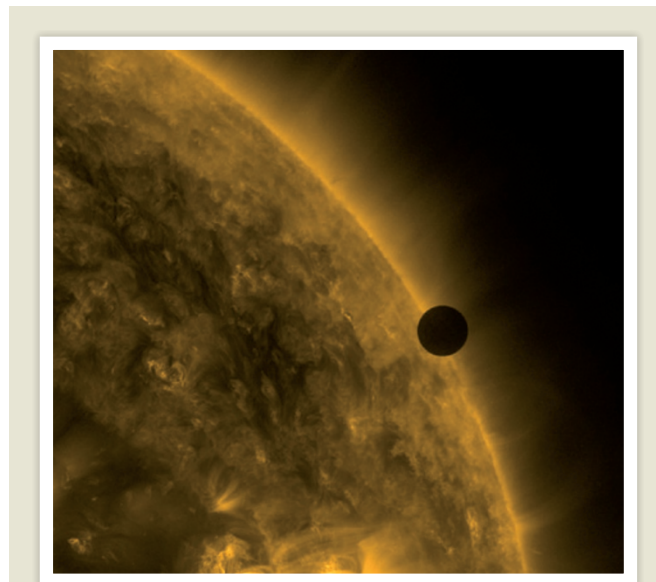
European science ministers have agreed a general structure for the region's enormous 2014–20 research funding programme. But at negotiations in Brussels on 31 May, the European Parliament and member states in eastern Europe all insisted that they want to keep the 'closed club' of western European research communities from winning the bulk of the funding. Mechanisms might include twinning wealthy western universities with eastern partners. Final decisions on the programme — the budget of which is yet to be confirmed, and wavers around €80 billion to €88 billion (US\$99 billion to \$109 billion) — will not be completed until 2013. See go.nature.com/pjueyp for more.

Integrity rebuke

At least 14 US federal agencies have scientific-integrity policies that do not comply with requirements laid down by the administration of President Barack Obama, according to the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), a non-profit watchdog based in Washington DC. In a letter to the Office of Science and Technology Policy on 31 May, POGO said the problem is that some agencies don't extend their policies to contractors or grant recipients. The watchdog singles out the Department of Energy for particular concern, because much of its research comes from non-governmental parties.

Golden age of gas

Natural gas (methane) could overtake coal as the world's second-largest energy source (after oil) by 2035 — but



Venus crosses the Sun

Venus made its transit across the Sun on 5–6 June, watched eagerly by professional and amateur astronomers, as well as by millions of people following it on live webcasts. The rare event occurs twice in close succession roughly every 120 years; the last transit was in 2004 and the next one will not be until 2117. Scientists hoped to get a once-in-a-lifetime snapshot of the climate of the entire planet (rather than the time- and space-limited atmospheric snapshots taken by the Venus Express probe), and to use the transit to check the way we measure exoplanets circling distant stars. See go.nature.com/yhpiqu for more.

only if the industry respects environmental and social concerns about how to extract it, according to an International Energy Agency report released on 29 May. The report, *Golden Rules for a Golden Age of Gas*, recommends full transparency and engagement with local communities when, for example, extracting recently discovered reserves of shale gas. It adds that although a switch to gas would lower carbon dioxide emissions, this would not be enough to limit the world's long-term predicted temperature increase to 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

NOAA funding row

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has clashed with Congress over attempts to finance its National Weather Service (NWS), after an investigation revealed on 24 May that the service had misappropriated funds. It had redirected millions of dollars to regional weather offices without Congress's permission. On 25 May, John Hayes, director of the NWS and assistant administrator of NOAA, resigned — although officials denied any link with the funding revelations. NOAA is now asking Congress to allow it to

redirect US\$36 million to the NWS from other departments in fiscal year 2012 — but some senators say they will not approve this without more details on why funds were originally misappropriated.

FUNDING

Texas cancer review

The Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT) in Austin is to re-review a controversial US\$18-million technology grant that it speedily awarded without scientific review in March to the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. The controversy at the state-funded institute began when its top scientist, Alfred Gilman, announced on 8 May that he would resign, citing concerns about the grant as among his reasons. But the re-review will be carried out by a commercialization review council, not a scientific body, CPRIT said on 30 May. See go.nature.com/7v59sq for more.

PEOPLE

Winning millions

The three Shaw prizes for 2012, worth US\$1 million apiece, were announced on 29 May. David Jewitt of the University of California, Los Angeles, and Jane Luu, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Lincoln Laboratory in Lexington, shared the astronomy prize for their work on trans-Neptunian objects. (The pair and a collaborator were also awarded the Kavli prize; see below.) The life-sciences and medicine prize went to Franz-Ulrich Hartl of the Max Planck Institute for Biochemistry in Munich, Germany, and Arthur Horwich of Yale University School of Medicine in New

NASA/SDO

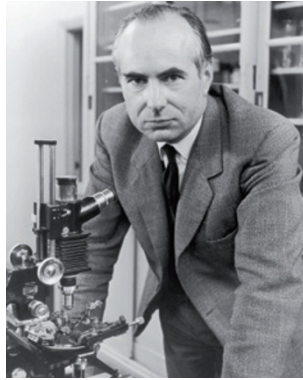
KEYSTONE/GETTY Haven, Connecticut, for research on protein folding. Maxim Kontsevich, at France's Institute of Advanced Scientific Studies outside Paris, won the mathematics prize for his work on algebra and geometry with applications in quantum physics. See go.nature.com/62ttvb for more.

Kavli prizes

One day after winning the Shaw prize (above), David Jewitt and Jane Luu learned that they had won a biennial Kavli astrophysics prize, together with Michael Brown of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. The Kavli nanoscience prize was awarded to Mildred Dresselhaus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the neuroscience prize was shared between Cornelia Bargmann of the Rockefeller University in New York, Winfried Denk of the Max Planck Institute for Medical Research in Heidelberg, Germany, and Ann Graybiel of MIT. Each prize is worth US\$1 million. See go.nature.com/m53tkz for more.

Nobel laureate dies

Physiologist and biophysicist Andrew Huxley, who shared the 1963 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, died on 30 May, aged 94. He won



his Nobel for work done with Alan Hodgkin in the late 1930s and after the Second World War at the Laboratory of the Marine Biological Association in Plymouth, UK. The two identified — from experiments on the giant axons of squid — how electrical impulses travel along nerve cells. Knighted for his science in 1974, Huxley (pictured) was also president of the Royal Society between 1980 and 1985, and master of Trinity College, Cambridge, UK, from 1984 to 1990.

RESEARCH

Spyware analysis

A massive computer virus, dubbed Flame or sKyWIper, that seems to be targeting computers in the Middle East, and Iran in particular, may have been active for the past five years, according to a report by a research team

involved in analysing the sophisticated and highly complex computer code. The conclusion, in a document released on 28 May by the Laboratory of Cryptography and System Security at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics in Hungary, is based on file names first spotted in Europe in 2007. Unlike the Stuxnet malware discovered in 2010 and credited with damaging Iran's nuclear centrifuges, the Flame virus seems to be a form of spyware. See go.nature.com/ucxbev for more.

BUSINESS

Genetics patents

The consumer genetic-testing company 23andMe announced its first gene-related patent on 28 May, and said that it intended to file more, causing concern among some customers over whether the patent would impede access to genetic data. The company, in Mountain View, California, uses data gathered from consenting customers to find genetic variants that are associated with disease and other traits. Its first patent is on a test for a version of a gene that may confer susceptibility to Parkinson's disease. In response to queries about how it would enforce patents, the company added that it did not think they should be

COMING UP

10–14 JUNE

The American Astronomical Society meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, includes discussions of concepts for telescopes on the Moon.

go.nature.com/bzonto

13 JUNE

NASA's NuSTAR telescope, which will examine high-energy X-rays produced at the thresholds of black holes (see *Nature* 483, 255; 2012), has its earliest scheduled launch date.

go.nature.com/1tribi

14–15 JUNE

Reports on the future of the US biomedical workforce — including recommendations to improve diversity — are delivered to a National Institutes of Health advisory committee.

go.nature.com/rfowsx

used to obstruct research. See go.nature.com/6ajqox for more.

Dragon returns

The first flight to the International Space Station (ISS) by a private, commercially owned vehicle ended in success on 31 May, when the Dragon capsule — launched by SpaceX of Hawthorne, California — splashed down in the Pacific Ocean. SpaceX can now begin in earnest on 12 ISS resupply missions, under a US\$1.6-billion commercial cargo contract with NASA. At more than \$100 million per launch, that is not a cheap ride — but far cheaper than the space shuttle, which cost around \$1.5 billion per launch. See go.nature.com/fxlcbv for more.

► **NATURE.COM**

For daily news updates see: www.nature.com/news

TREND WATCH

In late 2006, leading German science organizations and politicians signed up to a five-year effort to improve the representation of women in senior research positions. But an analysis published by the German Science Council on 29 May found only a modest improvement in equality. The chasm between the career success of male and female scientists is “less drastically remarkable” than 5 years ago, the report says. It proposes that organizations revisit pledges and set target quotas for top positions.

GLASS CEILING IN GERMAN SCIENCE

A concerted five-year push to improve the number of women in senior positions has had only marginal success.

