

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

POLICY

Research relegation

Switzerland-based scientists and companies will have restricted access to European research funds in 2014. Switzerland, which is not a member of the European Union (EU), has now lost its status as an associate partner in the EU's €80-billion (US\$110-billion) Horizon 2020 funding programme, after it imposed curbs on immigration last month (see *Nature* 506, 277; 2014). The relegation means that research institutes and companies based in Switzerland are no longer automatically eligible to apply for EU funding. Moreover, individual scientists cannot use basic-research grants from the European Research Council at Swiss institutes.

US Navy looks north

By 2030, the Northern Sea Route — a shipping lane running through the Arctic — could be ice-free and navigable for at least nine weeks each year, the US Navy said on 24 February in its 'Arctic roadmap'. The Northwest Passage — an alternative shipping route through the Arctic — could be open five weeks each year, the roadmap says. It also projects that the region's waterways will see rising activity from fishing, tourism, and oil and gas exploration, but says the development poses little risk to US national security. See go.nature.com/fv9skt for more.

DNA swap

The United Kingdom could become the first country to legalize mitochondrial replacement — a reproductive technology that produces offspring with three genetic parents. The technique could prevent children from inheriting diseases that



NASA/JAXA

Snow satellite launch

A joint US–Japanese mission to monitor rain and snow launched from the Tanegashima Space Center in Japan on 27 February. The US\$933-million Global Precipitation Measurement Core Observatory (pictured) will map precipitation across 90% of the globe every three hours.

The satellite was built by NASA and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), and the data it will collect could aid the accuracy of forecasts of severe weather, estimates of freshwater supplies and projections of climate change. See go.nature.com/rf9k5s for more.

affect mitochondria, the cell's energy producers, by transplanting nuclear genetic material to a donor cell with healthy mitochondria. A public consultation on the draft legislation is open until 21 May. In the United States, a Food and Drug Administration advisory panel examined the science behind the technologies on 25–26 February. See go.nature.com/ho8haz for more.

ITER critique

The governing council of ITER, a multibillion-euro international nuclear-fusion experiment, has approved 11 urgent reforms to the project's management. The executive summary of a critical assessment report considered at the council's 13 February

meeting was leaked online last week by *The New Yorker* magazine (see go.nature.com/7ayyqe). It details long-standing problems with ITER's complex international management (see *Nature* <http://doi.org/nwq>; 2012), but is more scathing than past assessments, calling for an "achievable and realistic schedule". It adds that the "schedule has slipped so consistently ... almost no one ... believes the announced dates for first plasma [2027] or other key milestones will be met".

Leaky helmet

An incident that nearly drowned an astronaut on a spacewalk last July could have been avoided, says a NASA report published on 26 February. Italian astronaut

Luca Parmitano had to feel his way back to the International Space Station airlock as more than 1 litre of water collected in his helmet, covering his eyes and nose. The water came in through a leak in his suit. A week earlier, the same leak had occurred, but the crew mistakenly thought that the water came from his drinking tube. The 'close-call' spacewalk would have been postponed if astronauts aboard the space station had fully investigated the first incident.

Radiation leak

The US Department of Energy reported on 26 February that 13 employees had tested positive for low-level radiation exposure following a leak at its Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, New

Mexico. The employees were above ground at the time of the 14 February leak, but preliminary tests suggest that they inhaled radioactive particles. Energy department officials said the health and environmental impacts of the leak seem to be minor, but traces of plutonium and americium were detected as far as 1 kilometre from the site. See page 15 for more on US nuclear waste storage.

PEOPLE

Final verdict

The South Korean Supreme Court upheld on 27 February a 2010 ruling that sentenced disgraced cloning researcher Woo Suk Hwang to an 18-month prison term for embezzlement and violation of the country's bioethics law. But Hwang will serve jail time only if he breaks laws during a two-year probation period. The court also annulled an earlier decision that would have forced Seoul National University to reinstate Hwang. This is the final judgment in a trial that started in 2006. See go.nature.com/tp7tq9 for more.

Borlaug bronze

A bronze statue of Norman Borlaug (pictured), the plant scientist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for developing high-yielding



wheat crops, will be unveiled at the US Capitol building in Washington DC on 25 March. The state of Iowa — where Borlaug was born — will install the statue, which depicts him taking field notes, to mark the 100th anniversary of his birth. Each US state is allowed to place two statues of prominent citizens in the National Statuary Hall Collection.

PUBLISHING

Gibberish papers

The publisher Springer will remove 16 computer-generated nonsense papers that it had published in its subscription database, it said last week. The papers, created by a computer program called SCigen, were spotted by computer scientist Cyril Labbé of Joseph Fourier University in Grenoble, France. Last week, *Nature* revealed that Labbé had privately informed Springer of the problem. He had also

contacted the US Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE), which has already withdrawn more than 100 nonsense articles. The papers had been included in conference proceedings, some of which were supposed to be peer-reviewed. See go.nature.com/d7h4sr for more.

Data sharing

The Public Library of Science (PLOS), an open-access publisher based in San Francisco, California, has strengthened its policy requiring authors to make data publicly available. From 3 March, researchers publishing in PLOS journals must share the data underlying their findings as soon as their manuscript is published and must do so on the Internet, for example in public data repositories. Some exceptions are allowed, for instance in cases in which patient privacy would be compromised.

RESEARCH

Ageing data

The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced on 26 February that it had added genetic and medical data from more than 78,000 people with an average age of 63 to an online genetics database, as part of its Genetic Epidemiology Research on Aging project. The data,

COMING UP

10–11 MARCH

The Royal Society in London hosts a meeting on phylogeny, extinction risks and conservation to discuss how information on evolutionary relationships can be combined with metrics such as lists of endangered species to assess conservation needs.

go.nature.com/pwvz8i

11 MARCH

The US Department of Agriculture ends its extended public comment period on whether it should allow sales of maize (corn) and soya bean seeds that are genetically engineered to resist herbicides such as 2,4-D.

collected with US\$25 million of NIH funding, will enable genome-wide association studies that will search for genetic signatures linked to a variety of diseases, including those associated with ageing.

Repatriated bones

Two German universities this week handed over 32 human skulls and three skeletons of Namibian origin to Namibian officials. The bones derive from tribe members who were killed by German troops or who died in concentration camps in the early twentieth century when Namibia was a German colony. Scientists used them for now-discredited research to determine anatomical differences between races. Researchers identified the remains among thousands of bones in historic anthropological collections at the University of Freiburg and the Charité Medical University in Berlin.

NATURE.COM

For daily news updates see:

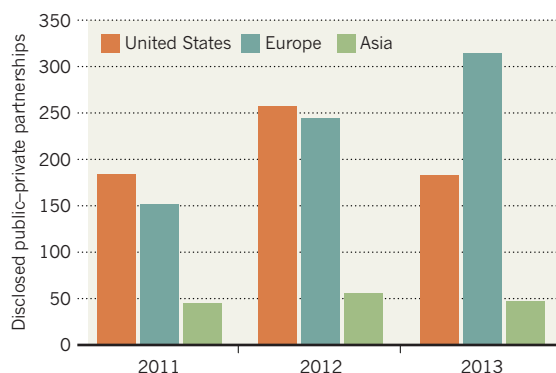
www.nature.com/news

TREND WATCH

Biotech firms are increasingly seeking partnerships with European academic institutes and funders, with 314 publicly disclosed links in 2013. The European Commission and Cancer Research UK made the most links, according to an analysis by the publication *SciBX*. Among companies, AstraZeneca had the most public-private partnerships, including its deal with Sweden's Karolinska Institute to create a US\$100-million cardiac-research centre. See go.nature.com/2fwpsq for more.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS SOAR IN EUROPE

Links between drug companies and funders or institutions are being forged in Europe more than in the United States.



Data include double counting because some partnerships involve companies and/or institutions from more than one region.