

JRC streamlines Ispra institutes in preparation for FP6

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The move aims to reduce costs and allow increased focus on two key policy areas -the "environment" and "citizen and consumer health and safety". The reorganisation will also help to absorb the impact of a decision by the European Commission to cut 200 statutory posts from the JRC, and enable it to streamline research activity in the face of a decline in its budget in real terms.

The process will see the merging of the four Ispra institutes into three, with the loss of the Space applications institute (SAI) and the incorporation of its activities into other institutes more tightly focused on EU objectives. The JRC is keen to emphasise that this will not entail any compromise of its expertise in space technologies, which will be integrated with other technologies to support EU policies.

This will include the deployment of the JRC's renowned space observation expertise in a new Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) initiative to be created in the reorganisation. The initiative is being launched following the findings of a five year assessment panel, backed up by an internal audit, that there was a 'substantial overlap' between the activities of the SAI and the Environment Institute (EI) and Institute for Systems, Informatics and Safety (ISIS).

The latter two institutes will also become key players in the new scheme, which aims

to support EU policy on sustainable development and global governance over the next decade by facilitating the provision of information and fostering knowledge related to the environment and security. The JRC, which has played a central role in the development of the GMES initiative to date, will now undertake a definitive role in its implementation in preparation for the Sixth Framework programme, co-ordinating technical work and partnerships and developing pre-operational services as specified by the relevant EC Directorates-General.

Two new institutes are also to be created in the reorganisation, absorbing the activities of the EI and ISIS. Many elements of ISIS will be incorporated into a newly-created Institute for the protection and security of the citizen (IPSC), providing a focus for growing EU security issues. The IPSC will aim to provide research-based, systems oriented support to EU citizen protection policies. This will include cybersecurity, anti-fraud measures, humanitarian security, nuclear safeguards and non-proliferation. The new unit incorporates nearly all of the former ISIS, along with two SAI units - the Monitoring agriculture with remote sensing unit and the Space systems application unit. The move will be accompanied by a comprehensive staff reorganisation to adapt to the new priorities of the Institute.

An Institute for environment and sustainability (IES) will also be created, combining EI and SAI expertise to provide scientific and technical support to EU strategies for the protection of the environment and sustainable development. The new institute will take an integrated approach to the two policy areas, investigating the level and progress of air, water and soil contaminants and their effect on the environment and individuals, and promoting a sustainable energy supply.

The creation of the IES, with its broader approach to environmental and sustainability issues, is particularly timely in view of the preparation of the Sixth Framework Programme's and the Environment DG's Sixth Environmental Action Programme.

Institute overheads will be further reduced through the merging of three Management support units into two, with the loss of one director's office. The new, leaner organisation of the Ispra institutes and the clearer division of responsibilities will also improve relations with both customers and potential partners. The reorganisation has also sanctioned the redistribution of staff from low priority areas to higher priority projects in preparation for the Sixth Framework programme.

The Institute for Health and consumer protection will remain mostly untouched for the time being, although its focus will gradually shift towards a more integrated approach to health matters.

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