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2 Science Projects to Receive Award of 1 Billion Euros

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BRUSSELS — Projects to imitate the brain and to develop new materials for information technology have won awards of about 1 billion euros each that will be announced Monday by the [European Commission](#).

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The awards, the largest of their kind ever made by the European authorities and equivalent to about \$1.35 billion each, are aimed at helping innovative industries in the European Union and nonmember countries like Switzerland.

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“Europe’s position as a knowledge superpower depends on thinking the unthinkable and exploiting the best ideas,” Neelie Kroes, the European commissioner for information technology, said in a statement prepared in advance of the formal announcement.

The goal is to “keep Europe competitive, to keep Europe as the home of scientific excellence,” Ms. Kroes said.

About half the money, which is to be disbursed over a decade, is expected to come from governments, and the rest from companies, institutes and universities, according to European Union officials. Details of how an initial payment of 54 million euros, almost \$73 million, for each project will be allocated should be decided in the coming months, officials said.

A selection committee of scientists and industrialists took two years to whittle a list of more than 20 projects down to two winners. The members of the selection committee have not been identified, but European Union officials said they were carefully vetted to avoid any conflicts of interest.

The [Human Brain Project](#) aims to create the most accurate simulation to date of the brain and its functions. The project could help aid diagnoses of diseases, help with the testing of new drugs, and develop supercomputing techniques modeled on the brain.

The project involves scientists from 87 institutions and will be led by Henry Markram, a professor at École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne in Switzerland. Partners in that project include the Institut Pasteur in France, I.B.M. in the United States and SAP in Germany.

The project on new materials will focus on ultrathin graphene, which conducts electricity better than copper, is up to 300 times stronger than steel and could be used to build better display screens. European officials say graphene could also replace and redefine components in devices like computers and phones by, for example, making them foldable.

That project involves more than 100 research groups and will be led by Jari Kinaret, a professor at Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden. Members of the consortium include the University of Cambridge in England and Nokia in Finland.

The European Union trails the United States in innovation, and that gap has been widening in some categories like research and development spending by business, according to a study issued by the European Commission in February 2012.

The bloc also lags behind Japan and South Korea in innovation, according to the study. And while the European Union is doing better than the biggest emerging nations, China is catching up, partly because of its strength in exports of medium and high-tech products, the study said.

European Union governments stepped up their calls for initiatives to address specific science and technology challenges at the end of 2009. The European Commission then came forward with plans for financing worth up to 2 billion euros, almost \$2.7 billion, over a decade.

The plan breaks with previous scientific initiatives that have normally run in cycles of two

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to four years. Ms. Kroes said the new financing model should deliver innovative technologies more quickly.

The decision meant disappointment for some projects, including FuturICT, which had aimed at creating “a planetary scale computer” for helping predict events like natural disasters. Some of the reasoning used to reject FuturICT was “quite crazy,” and the project’s leaders should be “pretty shocked,” Alex Vespignani, a professor at Northeastern University in Boston who is a supporter, wrote on the project’s Web site.

Exactly how much money from the central European Union budget will go to the two winners and to a huge array of other projects, including additional possible projects on the scale of those focused on graphene and the human brain, will partly depend on the outcome of a battle between leaders in the bloc on the size of the next long-term budget.

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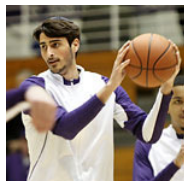
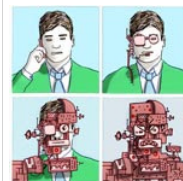


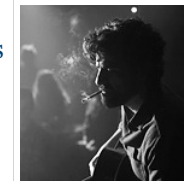
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