

**INFORMATION**

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

62/74

**Scientific and Technical Information - The role of Directorate-General XIII(\*)**

Any technologically advanced society such as our own depends, to a large and increasing extent, on a broad spectrum of information, ranging from new research findings to simple facts which are, nevertheless, invaluable for decision making processes. Scientific and technical information is, therefore, one of the main assets of the Community. So we need a policy for it, a common market for such information and an infrastructure for the proper distribution, handling and exploitation of this immense and complicated mass. Indeed, the vast sums spent on research and development cannot bear adequate fruit unless correct and adequate access to their informational product is ensured. The problems range from the policies of the Community as a whole (agricultural, regional, social, industrial, energy, monetary, etc.) to the detailed licensing of inventions made in the course of Community sponsored research. Moreover, we need to survey closely the political, social and other overtones of the modern advanced methods of handling data in our own and other societies.

Although the Commission of the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) has been active in some of these fields since 1958, its action was necessarily limited to its competence, i.e. nuclear energy. Since then, the merger of the executives of the three communities (Common Market, Coal and Steel and EURATOM) and the Resolution of the Council of Ministers taken on 24 June 1971, have created the enlarged framework necessary to consider this essential matter as a whole.

It is the task of DG XIII to tackle these problems and notably the creation of an overall network for scientific and technical information and documentation decided by the Council of Ministers in 1971.

(\*) DG XIII = Directorate-General of Scientific and Technical Information and Information Management

DG XIII is the essential repository within the Commission of technical skill and experience in the handling of scientific information and systematic documentation.

It includes units expert in :

- the handling and study of patents : the results of research carried out under Community programmes are scanned to detect patentable inventions; patents are then filed to preserve the rights of the Community and with a view to selling licences on the inventions which they protect. This unit also examines the protection afforded by patents in well-defined fields, in order to prepare the cases on which the Commission has to give a ruling, be it for a merger, be it for assessing the possibilities of infringement to the stipulations of the Treaty concerning unfair competition and monopolies ; moreover, it conducts studies of patent situations and trends in well-defined fields;
  
- organisation of scientific conferences and preparation and publication of proceedings : research results are published as reports and, whenever it is felt desirable to preserve the rights of the industries of the Community, they are distributed as restricted communications. A monthly bulletin, "Euroabstracts", gives abstracts of reports and patents covering Community research results ; "Transatom Bulletin" provides a monthly list of documents originally published in difficult languages (Russian, Japanese, etc.) and which have been, or are being translated into one western language (English, French, German) ; another periodical, "Eurospectra", issued quarterly, provides its readers with articles on scientific and technical subjects reflecting the current activities of the Commission ;
  
- computer analysis and programming, especially related to non-numerical information : this unit has, for many years, acquired expertise in specific problems of information science, and contributes to the implementation of the Resolution of the Council of Ministers concerning the establishment of a European scientific and technical information network ;
  
- related contractual and legal questions : its skills in these areas are at the disposal of other services of the Commission and are widely used by them.

DG XIII maintains and operates :

- the European Nuclear Documentation System : comprising about 1.5 million documents covering the major part of the nuclear literature published in the world since 1948 ; this wealth of knowledge is stored in the memories of a computer and is accessible either for retrospective searches or for selective dissemination of information on a subscription basis ;

- the central processing of the Communities' documentation system in metallurgy : this system was created, as a pilot project, following the Council Resolution of 24.6.71 ; it operates on a decentralised basis, participating centres in the Member States supplying as input to the system a selection, with abstracts, of their national literature and of the literature of third countries, whereas DG XIII processes this input, merges it onto one tape, copies of which are then distributed to each participant.

- a pilot file of research projects in agriculture, as well as documentation systems in other sectors, are now at various stages of development.

DG XIII, helped by the Committee for Scientific and Technical Information and Documentation (CIDST), whose mandate is to advise both the Commission and the Committee for Scientific and Technical Research (CREST) in the preparation of proposals to implement the Resolution of the Council of Ministers, is engaged in the study of a wide range of further activities ; these activities range from sectoral areas, such as environment, bio-medicine, agriculture, etc. to horizontal problems, such as harmonisation of methods and procedures, or charges for equivalent services, communications, training and education, translation, legal and technological problems and applied research in advanced fields (in collaboration with the Joint Research Centre).