

EUROPEAN ATOMIC
ENERGY COMMUNITY

E U R A T O M

The Commission

Official Spokesman

EXTRACTS FROM THE STATEMENT OF M. PAUL DE GROOTE
BEFORE THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
at Strasbourg on 18 October 1966

... "Among the many tasks assumed by Euratom are some which have required it to organise and implement, and thus to come to know the problems involved in, Community scientific and technical research activities in a particular sector.

This sector, i.e. the nuclear field, although circumscribed in its aims, brings Euratom up against the most general aspects of basic and applied research. In this way, Euratom has been able to acquire experience and views of practical significance on Europe's problem of consolidating and intensifying its research efforts.

In particular, Euratom has perceived that Community responsibilities in this respect transcend mere concern to restore an acceptable balance in relation to what is being accomplished in scientific and technical research in the rest of the world.

It is Euratom's profound conviction that in present circumstances no Community whatsoever can be complete, whether on the intellectual plane or as regards the material interests with which it is entrusted, unless it devotes a comparatively large proportion of its resources and manpower to research activities.

Such activities constitute a duty imposed upon the Community by the necessity of keeping abreast of progress and also by its inescapable obligation to develop and bring to fruition the talents which it embodies, not only in order to derive medium-term economic advantages but also, and above all, to quicken that impulse, the omnipresence of which is essential to safeguard any Community from

falling into stagnation and mediocrity.

Euratom is not, indeed, alone in its belief that, despite efforts and initiatives of considerable value, the level of research so far attained in the Community is inadequate and must accordingly be stepped up.

Comparison with the activities currently being pursued elsewhere must not breed either discouragement or dereliction. While the spectacle of successful scientific and technological achievements in some countries of the world should serve as a stimulus to us to build up a Community research policy on sounder lines and as a warning note against any inordinate programme, this comparison must not be allowed to stifle resolution, since any abandonment of efforts to fulfil scientific and technical aims, even of an ambitious character, would be tantamount to a vote of no confidence in Europe's inventive and creative potential in the field of science and technology.

This potential undoubtedly exists, as has been shown in the past. It would be a mistake to interpret our leeway as a symptom of spent force. In any event, the advances achieved in countries outside the Community - and here I am replying to the questions raised indirectly by Mr. Battaglia, in the space field in particular - should not bring about cessation of all participation in certain external projects already well under way. It must, in fact, be emphasized that there are partial areas which, without embracing the entire research field may nevertheless offer valuable opportunities for carrying out research the eventual importance of which cannot be assessed at the outset.

Abandonment through lack of faith is an irrevocable and negative way of solving some problems; at the same time, it destroys values and established influences, and even achievements which might prove fruitful during the subsequent development of certain research programmes.

These are the reasons why Euratom is willing to put the best of its acquired knowledge in its particular province, without restriction and without false pride as regards the difficulties it may have encountered and not always overcome, at the disposal of the European Community in its entirety.

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Euratom has confidence in the value of the research carried out at the various levels and by various bodies in the member countries. But it is also persuaded, without contemplating any interference with the worth-while activities already in progress, of the place which will be assumed in the years ahead by research organised at Community level. This research will of necessity be complementary; possibly it will be of an auxiliary character; the infrastructure will be marked by the more complete and therefore more efficient organisation required for productive execution of the research by the means already available in the Community in its present form.

The problems involved, the solution of which calls essentially for continuity of effort and unanimity of the parties concerned, follow a pattern of increasing difficulty according to whether the research is of a basic, applied (general scope) or industrial nature.

As regards the first two of these categories, Euratom considers joint action to be possible, desirable and promising. In the case of the third category - research for industrial purposes - Euratom, well aware as it is of the present state of affairs and what has been tried in the past, feels that for a definition of the terms of a common scientific policy in this field it can do no better than employ the analogy of Article 1 of its Treaty, which runs as follows: "It shall be the aim of the Community to contribute to the raising of the standard of living in Member States and to the development of commercial exchanges with other countries by the creation of conditions necessary for the speedy establishment and growth of nuclear industries".

Euratom makes a point of reiterating that it will spare no effort to build up, and subsequently to implement, such a joint scientific and technical research policy...".

M. De Groote then made the following comments.

First comment

After the merging of the Executives there will no longer be any problem as regards the assignment of powers in the field of scientific and technical research. It may be hoped that on this occasion the problem will be left to persons well versed in matters concerned with the drafting and application of research programmes.

Before the merger, Euratom, in deference to Mr. Gaetano Martino, will give its opinion as to the best courses to be adopted and will formulate proposals which it deems calculated to serve the interests of the entire Community.

Second comment

If the member states are firmly resolved to launch and then carry through a joint scientific and technical policy, this resolution will only find full expression provided it is stated clearly and unequivocally. Essential as it is to success, it will in our view be worthy of something more than mere interpretations of the texts of provisions in the Paris and Rome Treaties.

Third comment

Anxious as always to avoid starting off on the wrong foot and to keep clear of solutions which would be more formal than effective, Euratom is profoundly convinced of the impossibility of making one body responsible for drafting a joint research policy and another body responsible for carrying it out. If a course is to be steered between the Charybdis of purely theoretical standpoints and the scylla (even more perilous) of concepts immured in generalities and pious wishes, both the planning and the implementation of a research policy and programme must be in the same hands, without prejudice, of course, to any of the necessary consultation processes.

Fourth comment

Euratom does not consider ^{it} appropriate to establish an organic link between economic policies on the one hand and scientific research on the other.

The means of conducting the latter are undeniably conditioned by the fruits of the former.

But the inspiration for research, the conditions for its efficient development and consequently for its success, would in our view be ill served by such an organic link. While consultations must, as we have said, be extensive and well organised, the fact remains that, to the best of our knowledge, there is no country which follows a policy of institutional subordination of the one

sector to the other, either explicit or even de facto subordination.

It would appear wholly inadvisable to have scientific research bound up with economic policy and thereby superimpose upon the vicissitudes normally inherent in a research policy those inseparable from an economic policy, which furthermore has through circumstances to be modified from time to time.

Again, it is a mistake for the guide-lines and aims of the basic sciences, biology and certain human sciences to be dictated by the bodies responsible for the conduct of the economy. It must be pointed out that in the field of basic research, which is already and will perennially be dependent in large measure on the universities, it would be paradoxical if the level of scientific activities were to be determined by economic agencies, which, moreover, would be exceeding their duties in taking account of the exigencies of the universitas generalis in the fulfilment of its teaching and research tasks.

Industrial research, for its part, stems from industrial practice. It conforms directly with manufacturers' characteristics, with the size of enterprises or groups of enterprises. It thus accords with promptings or suggestions other than those which may be dictated by institutions specially responsible for participating in the overall organisation of the economy.

December this year will see the tercentenary of the French Academy of Science, whose rôle in the world of discovery and invention reflects honour on France and on the whole of Europe. This venerable institution owes its origin to some advice given by Colbert to King Louis XIV in 1666. Colbert suggested to the King that an official academy should be founded for the advancement of science, and in particular "for its application in industry with a view to increasing France's manufactures and exports".

Ladies and Gentlemen, Colbert was wise enough not to put the policy and programmes of the Academy of Science under the jurisdiction of his ministry.

But having expressed these reflections, I should like to pass on to positive considerations regarding what has to be done in the near future in the field of scientific and technical research.

We, too, are convinced that it is essential to lose no time in setting to work. We, too, are certain that the idea of solving the problem in its entirety is utopian and that preparations must be made as opportunity offers for lines of action which are within the immediate compass of the Community. These include three fields to which attention has already been drawn in the course of this afternoon, namely:

- space technology;
- aeronautics;
- electronic machines for processing numerical and non-numerical data.

The ground can be cleared without delay, bearing in mind that we are concerned here with widening the area of forms of collaboration which have recently been given a new structure and added strength and which, moreover, transcend the Community of the Six - as regards the first two of the aforementioned fields, at all events.

The third field, that of electronic machines, is at present confined to the industrial sector. Here too there are definite possibilities, but it will no doubt be as well, in order to give you an idea of the extent of the problem, if I point out that the basic research budget, not including development research, of just one firm outside the Community runs at an annual rate of over \$ 200 million.

I shall now proceed to indicate some of the courses of action for which efficient planning could already be put into operation. Let us first of all consider co-operation in the field of basic science. Mr. Gaetano Martino has drawn attention to the advisability of organising a symposium of qualified persons in this field, that is to say, university graduates, representatives of public bodies and research organisers; in our view, this initiative should be followed up and implemented very quickly by the conception in Europe of a scheme for reinforcing and extending co-operation in the field of basic sciences on a Community scale. It would further be advisable to obtain results of the extremely interesting and fruitful work hitherto carried out under the sponsorship of the Council of Europe.

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Secondly, we have the field of research in the public interest. Here Community-level activity will sooner or later have to embrace the following subjects (and there is nothing at the present time to stop this from being put into practice): (1) research aimed at solving problem posed by pollution of the atmosphere; (2) research of the type called for a few minutes ago by Mr. Oele, i.e. designed to safeguard long-term supplies of desalinated water - a question which, as Mr. Oele is aware, we in Euratom, are now tackling; (3) research in liaison with efforts to combat corrosion in metals and materials; and (4) research - which, if successful, will prove of inestimable value - relating to the strength of road-surfacing.

All these projects which I have just enumerated are of vital importance. We realise, of course, that they do not cover the entire field. But you will appreciate that this could be a first step, and we feel that an early start with research in the fields which I have mentioned would have the virtue of intensifying the practice of joint working between Community teams, of translating into concrete terms the will to collaborate in scientific research and, indeed, holding out fresh prospects of activity for those of our scientists who are desirous of staying in the Community.

I should also like to state that in the near future Euratom will be in a position to take a whole range of measures with the aim of contributing to the improvement of the organisation of the research infrastructure. This infrastructure, let me remind you briefly, related in particular to the calculation instruments - the number of such instruments, their geographical distribution and their interconnection.

It is also concerned with the efficient organisation of metrology and standards, as well as with the availability of materials-testing devices. And - an especially important point - scientific research organised on a broad basis is inconceivable without creating new systems for the storage and retrieval of research information.

I believe that before much more time has elapsed we shall be able to enlighten you as to the success of our research in this field of documentation.

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Turning finally to the sphere of industrial research, I would emphasize that while initiatives and projects necessarily stem from private industry, the success of the research is a matter of public interest.

This type of research is conditioned, as I stated a few moments ago, by a range of specific factors bound up with firms' methods of operation and size, and thus the Community authorities must act as catalysts in the process of achieving favourable results from such research. By prompt and appropriate enquiries, the Community must bring to light the inhibiting factors now at work and ascertain what corrective measures can be taken.

Mr. Gele, when we make a comparative examination of the state of research in the United States and in Europe, it is in this sector that we find the most glaring weaknesses.

Mr. President, I do not want to prolong this address any further - the hour is advanced - and I therefore conclude by expressing the sincere wish that in this field of scientific research generalities will be brushed aside and that efforts will be directed without further delay to coming to grips with the facts and setting on foot practical projects.