



R&D EVALUATION

€ Commission of the European Communities

THE EVALUATION OF THE CONCERTED ACTIONS

OF THE COMMUNITY'S FIRST

MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME 1978-1981

- Cellular Ageing and Decreased Functional Capacity of Organs
- Extracorporeal Oxygenation
- The Registration of Congenital Abnormalities and Twins

1. BACKGROUND

This evaluation was carried out in the context of the Commission's current efforts to develop a global system for evaluating the results of Community R&D programmes. This is the fifth external evaluation of Community research programmes during which evaluation methods have been experimentally applied to different types of Community research actions.

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2. THE EVALUATION METHOD

These are the first of the Community's research activities known as concerted actions to be evaluated externally. Research in the form of concerted actions is decided upon, carried out and totally financed by national institutes, while the Commission only provides and organises the coordination of the research. The method which was applied for the first time was in the form of a "Hearing". Covering a period of three days, a panel of external and independent experts, questioned leading representatives involved in the projects being evaluated.

3. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The scope of the evaluation was limited, given the time available and the restricted role of the Commission in this type of research action, to the assessment of the value and impact of the concerted actions and of the effectiveness of the coordination. The panel was also invited to make recommendations for future actions in the field and to comment on the method applied.

4. COMPOSITION OF THE PANEL

Sir Gordon Wolstenholme (Chairman) Royal College of Physicians,
London (UK)

Dr. Ronald Akehurst Institute of Social and Economic
Research, University of York (UK).

Dr. Lise Cedard	Laboratoire de Chimie Hormonale des Maternités Cochin de Port Royal, Paris (F)
Professor V. P. Eijvoogel	Central Laboratory of the Netherlands Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service (N)
Professor Niels Tygstrup	University Hospital, Copenhagen (DK)
Professor von Manger-Koenig	Bundesministerium für Jugend, Familie und Gesundheit, Bonn (D)
Professor A. Zanchetti	Istituto di Ricerche Cardiovascolari Giorgini Sisini, Università di Milano (I)

5. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Outlined below is a summary* of the findings of the evaluation panel
as submitted to the Commission by its Chairman, Sir Gordon Wolstenholme.

"The Commission was wise and fortunate in the choice of the first 3
examples of Concerted Action in Medical and Public Health Research.

"Cellular Ageing research has predominantly important social implications;
Extracorporeal Oxygenation emphasises the dramatically life-saving
potentialities of new advances in technology; and registration of con-
genital abnormalities is an essential exercise in epidemiology which
opens up possibilities of much needed preventive measures and safe-
guards for environmental foeto-toxicity.

"Apart from early delays in implementation, and continuing hindrances
from unnecessarily restrictive financial regulations, the First

*The full report is available under the reference EUR 7730

Programme of Concerted Actions has been responsibly and efficiently managed. The scientific research, headed by the Project Leaders, has been competently and imaginatively conducted.

"Member States need to enter into greater commitment in regard to the work of the Committee for Medical and Public Health Research (CRM). Too little is known in Member States about the Concerted Action programmes, and information of relevant research progress in the Member States is slow to reach the Concerted Action Committees (COMACs). A reinvigorated CRM should provide the active interface for the flow of information in both directions.

"Periodic evaluation of Concerted Actions should be an integral part of their organization, and can be carried out in a simple and inexpensive manner.

"Concerted Action has been shown to be the method by which Community intervention and moderate financial support in medical and health research can best support the national research policies of Member States.

"RECOMMENDATIONS

Many points of recommendation have been implicit in the report. A further, weighty consideration is provided by the wealth of planning which has gone into a Third Programme of Concerted Action. The Panel's recommendations can therefore be simple:

- i) Concerted Action is particularly suited to the support of medical and health research by the Community and should be continued and expanded.
- ii) The Committee on Medical and Public Health Research (CRM) has shown prescience, imagination and responsibility in the choice of topics, and should be given greater support within Member States in regard to expertise, authority and national recognition of progress.
- iii) A more assured and confident CRM should in turn strengthen the constitution of Concerted Action Committees (COMACs), and then there should be a closer ongoing relationship between CRM and COMACs.
- iv) The nomination by Member States of institutes and individuals to take part in Concerted Action should be subject to scrutiny and approval by other Member States within CRM, in full consultation with the appropriate Project Leader.
- v) The first 3 Project Leaders are impressively competent, and the vital importance of the personal qualities of the Project Leader must be kept well in mind in the future selection of other Leaders.
- vi) Project Leaders should be entrusted with greater financial

responsibility and freedom, in the interests of speed of decision and action.

- vii) The Commission should take steps to ensure the development within the Community of any technological and industrial advances arising from research supported by the Community.
- viii) Periodic evaluation should be included in all programmes of Concerted Action, and should be repeated every 2 to 3 years.
- ix) Evaluation can be performed adequately by a small team of external peer assessors, using the Hearing method supported by ample documentation. "