

Information note from the Commission  
concerning the setting up of an international foundation  
to promote cooperation in the scientific field,  
in the new independent states

## INFORMATION NOTE FROM THE COMMISSION

1. At the meeting of the Research Council on 29 April 1992 a discussion took place on a proposal from the French Government to set up a specific system for providing international support for research in the independent states of the former Soviet Union.
2. The following initiative has been prepared with the date of the G7 Summit in Munich in mind (6 to 8 July 1992).<sup>1</sup>
3. The fundamental reasons of such action are the massive brain drain which is destroying much of the scientific potential in Russia and the other independent states, following the collapse of the economy and of the administration, combined with the consequences of this state of affairs for many research scientists who are forced to seek other jobs. This international solidarity with an endangered scientific community of worldwide repute also reflects a profound conviction of the fundamental link between the vitality of scientific research and democracy. Open, stimulating exchanges between the scientific communities in the East and West will contribute towards economic reform and reconstruction.
4. The present initiative complements the launch of the International Science and Technology Centre launched at the Ministerial Conference on 11 March 1992. The ISTC has the important strategic function of redeploying scientists from the military-based industries in the former Soviet Union. It is the result of an agreement on the basis of Article 235 of the EEC Treaty and Article 101 of the Euratom Treaty, with three non-Community countries, setting up an intergovernmental organization governed by international law.
5. This initiative by the Community has been put to the G7 in Munich and will be open to any Member States or other OECD countries which wish to make a substantial contribution to the Foundation.
6. By contrast, the present initiative, the Commission intends to set up a flexible mechanism, for a limited period (until the end of 1994), allowing speed in action, to which other partners could join. If a legal entity needs to be set up, it could in principle be a legal instrument under Belgian law (the Law of 25 October 1919), based on Article 211 of the Treaty and modelled on the Human Frontier Science Organization. It would take the form of an international scientific organization designated the "International Foundation to promote cooperation in the scientific field in the new independent states". The headquarters and Secretariat will be based in Brussels, provided the national authorities are willing to facilitate their work.

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<sup>1</sup> *Armenia, Azebadjan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghuzistan, Moldavia, Russia, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine*

7. The research activities to be undertaken should include, in particular : (i) funding of joint projects by teams of scientists from the Community and from the independent states; (ii) granting of scholarships to allow greater mobility; (iii) organization of scientific workshops and seminars and establishments of networks. Action based on private law has the advantage of speed and flexibility, not least in terms of management.
8. At this stage this is an initiative which the Commission takes under its own jurisdiction since it is a preparatory measure and not a significant action as per Article 22(1) of the Financial Regulation, which should require a basic act from the Council. If, after assessment, this initiative produces results which warrant continuation inclusion in the fourth R&TD framework programme will be proposed to the legislative body.
9. The appropriations set aside for this initiative amount to ECU 4 million in 1992, under budget heading B6-8200 for international scientific cooperation. In the light of the results obtained a more substantial contribution from the Community budget is envisaged for 1993. The total available volume will depend on additional contributions from the Member States and the other partners.
10. Cooperation from the new independent states in running these activities is essential if this initiative is to operate properly (administrative measures, exemption from tax and customs duty, currency convertibility, etc.). The Russian authorities have already given a positive response in this respect. The contribution of the scientific bodies in the independent states should come in the form of help with the general overheads of laboratories since it is essential that funds granted by the Foundation should be additional, so as to enable scientists to pursue their research activities and to direct them toward the interests of international cooperation and also to buy scientific equipment, to subscribe to journals and to attend seminars, etc.
11. The research projects will be selected on the basis of a peer review system, taking into account the opinions of scientific experts from the Community, other Western partners and the independent states in all the scientific fields.
12. The Commission has decided to take any measures required to implement the establishment of an "International Foundation to promote cooperation in the scientific field in the new independent states" as set out above.