



European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

SESSION DOCUMENTS

English Edition

6 December 1990

A 3-0326/90/ANNEX

O P I N I O N

of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and
Industrial Policy

for the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology

on the Commission proposal for a Council decision
concerning a specific programme of research and
technological development in the field of information
technology (1990-1994)
(COM(90) 153 final - C3-156/90 - SYN 258)

Draftsman: Mr Karsten Friedrich HOPPENSTEDT

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PE 144.399/fin./Ann.
Or. DE

A Series: Reports - B Series: Motions for Resolutions, Oral Questions - C Series: Documents received from other Institutions (e.g. Consultations)

* = Consultation procedure requiring a single reading

**II = Cooperation procedure (second reading) which requires the votes of a majority of the current Members of Parliament for rejection or amendment

**I = Cooperation procedure (first reading)

*** = Parliamentary assent which requires the votes of a majority of the current Members of Parliament

OPINION

(Rule 120 of the Rules of Procedure)

of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
and Industrial Policy
for the Committee on the Energy, Research and Technology

Draftsman: Mr Karsten Friedrich HOPPENSTEDT

At its meeting of 15 October 1990 the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy appointed Mr Hoppenstedt draftsman.

At its meeting of 3/4 December 1990 it considered the draft opinion and adopted the conclusions unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: Beumer, Chairman; Fuchs, vice-chairman; Hoppenstedt, draftsman; Cassidy, de Donnea, Ferreira Ribeiro, Friedrich, Herman, Lulling, Pinxten, Rogalla, Sboarina, Sisó Cruellas and von Wogau.

I. Introduction

Information Technology is affecting the economy to an ever-increasing extent. It helps to improve the competitiveness of industry and the services sector. The further development of Information Technology requires considerable expenditure on research and development calling for transnational cooperation. Microelectronics, information processing systems and software, business and home systems, computer integrated manufacturing and basic research have been identified as priorities.

This programme is implemented by the selection of research and development projects to enable them to benefit from Community funding.

II. Evaluation of the Commission proposal

With its programme the Commission effectively highlights the importance of information technology for Europe's industrial and economic development. The proposed support measures for producers and users of information technology are welcomed in principle, since they raise the international competitiveness of European industry and exploit the potential of information technology.

One of the shortcomings of the Commission proposal is that the aims of the programme are inadequately defined and the current deficits in the Community insufficiently analysed. This is also true of the links between the specific programmes. In Annex I a link should also therefore be made between research and development activities in the areas of: communication technology, telematic systems and industrial and materials technologies.

It should also be pointed out that the way in which this proposal is presented is not always easy to understand.

In order to achieve savings of time and money for the bodies of the Community, the Member States and the social partners which are involved in the legislative process, the Commission would be well advised to put the proposal for a decision and the detailed rules for implementing the programme in a general section and to define the specific programmes in individual sections¹.

It must also be remembered that the Commission proposals are intended not only for specialist organizations but also for the representatives of the peoples of the States brought together in the Community. Members of Parliament can only exercise the advisory and supervisory powers conferred upon them by Article 137 of the EEC Treaty if the Commission presents the whole of its proposals in all the official Community languages. This applies particularly to the Financial Statement and the Impact Statement.

It is regrettable that point VII of the Impact Statement does not include a report of the reaction of the representatives of Community industry and science who were consulted.

¹See PE 145.169(II)(3)

The Commission should always include a glossary of the numerous abbreviations used in the technical annexes to proposals. Any non-specialist reader of the Community proposal would be at a loss to know the meaning of 'the IT Community', 'the IES programme', 'COSINE', 'ASIC', 'JESSI', and 'CAD', the 'IC industry' and 'SICMOS technology', to mention only a few examples!

III. Conclusions

The committee responsible is asked to take the following conclusions into account:

1. in the interests of reducing the volume of legislation, the three proposals for decisions on telematics, information technology and communications technology should be covered by one text divided into one general and three specific sections²;
2. the technical annexes should always include a glossary of abbreviations used;
3. the proposals should be presented in all of the official Community languages throughout;
4. the bodies involved in the legislative process should be informed of the substance of the reactions of the representatives of industry and science who were consulted;
5. the technical content of the proposed programmes should be more closely defined, making it possible to allocate resources appropriately;
6. the annual updating of the proposed programmes in the form of work programmes must not be allowed to affect the necessary continuity of the research;
7. the special procedure proposed by the Commission over and above the usual publication of calls for proposals should be permitted only if it offers small and medium-sized undertakings or universities and research institutes a greater chance of submitting applications;
8. the 10% of expenditure proposed for basic research in Annex II should not represent an area in its own right but should be distributed among the specific areas;
9. there is a danger in the case of support for home and business systems of fragmentation of resources resulting from too many individual projects. The main consideration here should be to select those areas where Europe can regain its market lead. Standardization should also be encouraged because of its economic importance;
10. the reports mentioned in Article 5 should be submitted to Parliament for its opinion.

²See PE 145.169 (III)(1)

