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R E P O R T

of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology

on the Commission proposal for a Council decision amending Decision 89/118/EEC on a European stimulation plan for economic science (1989 - 1992) (SPES)
(COM(90) 0179 final - C3-0183/90 - SYN 121)

Rapporteur: Mr Glyn FORD

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PE 143.228/fin.
Or. EN

C O N T E N T S

By letter of 22 June 1990 the Council consulted the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 130q (2) of the EEC Treaty, on the Commission proposal for a Council decision on a European stimulation plan for economic science (1989-1992) (SPES).

At the sitting of 9 July 1990 the President of Parliament announced that he had referred this proposal to the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy for their opinions.

At its meeting of 29 June 1990 the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology appointed Mr Glyn Ford rapporteur.

At its meetings of 6-8 November, 19-20 December 1990, 28-29 January and 4 February 1991 it considered the Commission proposal and draft report.

At the last meeting it adopted the draft legislative resolution unanimously. The following took part in the vote: LANNOYE, vice-chairman and acting chairman; BETTINI, CAUDRON (for HERVE), CHIABRANDO, DESAMA, GASOLIBA I BÖHM, LARIVE, LINKOHR (for FORD, rapporteur), QUISTHOUDT-ROWOHL, SAMLAND (for SCHINZEL), SELIGMAN and WEST.

The opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy are attached.

The report was tabled on 6 February 1991.

The deadline for tabling amendments will appear on the draft agenda for the part-session at which the report is to be considered.

A

DRAFT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION
(Cooperation procedure: first reading)
embodying the opinion of the European Parliament
on the Commission proposal for a Council decision
on a European stimulation plan for economic science (1989-1992) (SPES)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission proposal to the Council (COM(90) 0179 final - SYN 121[1],

- having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 130q (2) of the EEC Treaty (C3-0183/90),

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy (A3-0020/91),

1. Rejects the Commission proposal;

2. Calls on the Commission to withdraw its proposal;

3. Instructs its President to forward this opinion to the Council and Commission.

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[1] - OJ No. C 155, 26.6.1990, page 6

B

Explanatory Statement

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION PROPOSAL

1. The Commission proposal COM(90)179 revises Council Decision 88/118/EEC[1] of 13 February 1989 on a European stimulation plan for economic science. The revision is limited to two changes in the legislative text:

(i) an increase in the amount deemed necessary from 6 mECU to 10 mECU and an increase in programme staffing from 2 to 3;

(ii) the addition of micro-economics, evaluation of the economic impact of environmental risks, and east-west economic relations in Europe, to the list of Topics of Research.

2. The justification for the proposed provision is the bald statement that "evaluation of (...) proposals shows that the majority of them (...) were of great interest and came from quality research teams".

COMMENT

3. The "success" of the programme, in terms of project proposals submitted is undeniable. The average rate of acceptance in 1989 and 1990 was 7%, which is low even compared to other Community programmes which have a high "demand" rate. The Commission therefore appears to have a prima facie case for seeking increased funding.

4. Equally, political developments since the adoption of the programme in 1989 would appear to warrant the new research areas such as the economic transformation of Eastern Europe and the economics of more environmentally oriented policies.

5. A number of reservations must however be expressed:

(i) Article 6 of the programme Decision states that "During the third year of the programme, the Commission shall address a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the basis of the results so far achieved. This report shall be accompanied by suggestions for changes which may be necessary in the light of these results". Your rapporteur considers therefore that any proposal to revise the programme, such as the proposal under consideration, should be accompanied by an evaluation of the programme results, even if the timing of the revision is being brought forward. No evaluation of results, or evidence of interim results, has been provided by the Commission.

(ii) The annex to the decision states that "where scientific and technical quality is comparable, particular attention will be given to projects likely to reduce scientific and development disparities between Member States and thereby to contribute to

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[1] OJ L44 of 16.2.1989

economic and social cohesion". Your rapporteur can find no evidence that it its selection of projects the CODEST-E committee has respected this legal provision.

(iii) The rapporteur is puzzled by the Commissions's failure, while adding to a long list of research topics, to delete other topics where weak demand may have put into question their utility. The rapporteur considers that other topics might be considered for inclusion, such as the economics of technological change and innovation. Neither has the Commission taken advantage of the revised proposal to include the social sciences within the scope of the programme, despite assurances given when the original SPES proposal was approved by Parliament.

(iv) The rapporteur stresses the need to reflect a wide range of political views in the studies undertaken and considers that a mechanism to ensure this should be devised.

(v) The rapporteur sees the contradiction in, on the one hand, evidence supplied by the Commission as to the urgent need to revise, expand and develop Community action in this field, and, on the other, the Commission's total failure to propose the same area in the Third Framework Programme for RTD (1990-1994), even as a sub-programme of Area 6 on Human Capital and Mobility.

CONCLUSIONS

6. The rapporteur considers that what is required is not so much an adjustment of an existing minor pilot action, but a thorough-going and reasoned revision, leading to a new proposal which would include, inter alia, research in the area of social sciences. Your rapporteur accordingly recommends that the Commission be asked to withdraw its proposal, await an evaluation of the SPES pilot action, and to submit a new proposal.

OPINION

of the Committee on Budgets

Letter from the chairman of the committee to Mr LA PERGOLA, chairman of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology

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19 September 1990

Subject: Proposal for a Council decision amending Decision 89/118/EEC on a European stimulation plan for economic science (1989 - 1992) (SPES) (C3-183/90 - (COM(90) 0179 final - SYN 121)

Dear Mr La Pergola,

At its meeting of 19 September 1990, the Committee on Budgets considered the above proposal.

It noted that the proposal increases the amount initially considered necessary, and revises the objectives of the programme.

The Committee on Budgets approves the proposal.

Your sincerely

Thomas von der VRING

Present: von der VRING, chairman; LAMASSOURE, vice-chairman; COCHET, COLOM I NAVAL, GOEDMAKERS, HOLZFUSS, LANGES, LO GIUDICE, NAPOLETANO (for COLAJANNI), PASTY and ZAVVOS.

OPINION

of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy

Letter from the Chairman of the committee to Mr LA PERGOLA, Chairman of the Committee on the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology

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Brussels, 21 September 1990

Subject: Proposal for a Council decision amending decision 89/118/EEC on a European stimulation plan for economic science (1989-92) (SPES) (C3-183/90) - COM(90) 179 - SYN 121

Dear Mr La Pergola,

At its meeting of 19-21 September 1990, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy considered the above proposal from the Commission and adopted the following conclusions:

The European stimulation plan for economic science 1989-1992 (SPES), which was adopted by the Council on 13 February 1989 and has been allocated 6 m ECU, has generated great interest (5,000 requests for information in 10 months; 166 proposals involving 793 research teams submitted between 1 April and 1 November 1989).

The Commission was therefore able to select only a very small number of the projects proposed (30 at present, representing a total of 2.3 m ECU) despite their merit.

For this reason the Commission proposes raising the programme allocation to 10 m ECU for the entire 1989-1992 period, comprising 6 m ECU on the basis of Decision 89/118/EEC of 13 February 1989 and 4 m ECU on the basis of the revised programme (unexpended balance from the Science programme).

In addition, the Commission proposes adding 3 areas of research to the 7 existing areas: micro-economy, problems arising from the economic impact of environmental risks and economic relations between Western and Eastern Europe.

The committee appreciates the considerable need for economic research in the Community and welcomes the success of the programme and therefore approves in principle the Commission's proposal to increase appropriations.

However, it regrets having to express an opinion without access to a detailed evaluation report on the results of the projects and subjects chosen, their consistency and the type of team selected and their distribution between Member States.

Yours sincerely,

(sgd) B. BEUMER

The following took part in the vote: Beumer, Chairman; Beazley; Bernard-Reymond; Bofill Abeilhe, Cassidy, Colom I naval, Herman, Lemmer (for Gallenzi); Porto (for de Donnea); Merz; Metten; Speciale, Van der Waal