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COMMISSION PROPOSES PLAN TO STIMULATE
E.C. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

European scientists would be encouraged to cooperate across national borders under a plan designed to bolster innovative scientific research in the European Community.

The Commission of the European Communities has proposed a wide-ranging program of grants and other financial incentives to stimulate original, multinational scientific and technical research projects. The Commission hopes to improve communication among scientists in the 10 E.C. member states and halt the "brain drain" of young researchers who leave Europe because they cannot find adequate employment or training opportunities.

"The European Community possesses a scientific and technical potential which is both considerable and of high quality," a Commission report states. "However, this potential no longer always seems to be capable of sustaining the intense competition through creativity and innovation which is building up remorselessly at the international level."

The Commission, the Community's executive body, said a stimulation plan should support multidisciplinary projects ranging from basic research to work that could be of strategic value to industry. It pinpointed these fields as particularly appropriate for innovative research: mathematics and information technology, advanced optics, chemistry, surface chemistry and physics, earth sciences, oceanography, scientific instrumentation and biocommunication (a biological science that encompasses research into such fields as membranology and molecular genetics).

The Commission plan, which will be considered by the E.C. Council of Ministers, includes these elements:

--Grants to help researchers travel to other countries for short-term visits, training programs or work on a research team.

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--Support for joint efforts by research groups from different countries who are working on parallel tracks. Funding would cover meetings, joint experiments and dissemination of results among the teams.

--Contracts for specific projects involving teams from various E.C. countries who agree to work together to achieve an objective within a given time.

--Preparation of a guide to research centers willing to participate in exchange and cooperation efforts.

--Investigation into the feasibility of travel vouchers allowing researchers to get reduced air and train fares within the Community.

--A meeting of member states to identify ways of eliminating barriers to career advancement for scientists who conduct research in foreign countries.

The Commission plan, developed at the Council's request, would expand upon an experimental two-year project to stimulate scientific research that began in the Community in July 1983.

The first stage of the new program would cover the period from 1985 to 1988, with funding of 90 million European Currency Units* to support about 4,000 researchers -- 1 percent of researchers throughout the E.C. The Commission's long-range goal is to involve 5 percent of Community researchers.

The Commission said it would like to explore arrangements for eventually extending the stimulation plan to non-Community European countries.

*ECU = \$.81 on May 7, 1984