European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1983-1984

8 November 1983 DOCUMENT 1-981/83

Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology

on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 1-395/83 - COM(83) 260 final) for a decision on the framework programme for Community scientific and technical activities (1984-1987)

Rapporteur : Mr B. SÄLZER

PE 87.065/fin.

English Edition

By letter of 2 June 1983, the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament to deliver an opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision on the framework programme for Community scientific and technical activities (1984-1987).

On 6 June 1983, the President of the European Parliament referred this proposal to the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology as the committee responsible and to the Committee on Agriculture, the Committee on Budgets, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, the Committee on External Economic Relations and the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment for opinions.

At its meeting of 15 June 1983, the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology appointed Mr SÄLZER rapporteur.

The committee considered the Commission proposal at its meeting of 20 September and decided unanimously to recommend to the President that Rule 99(1) of the Rules of Procedure (procedure without report) be applied. The Committees on Agriculture, Budgets, External Economic Relations and Social Affairs and Employment, which had been asked for their opinions, agreed to the application of this procedure.

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, which had also been asked for its opinion, objected to the application of this procedure. At its sitting of 10 October 1983, Parliament noted this objection and, pursuant to Rule 34 of the Rules of Procedure, referred the Commission proposal back to the committee responsible.

At its meeting of 2 November 1983, the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology decided unanimously to recommend that Parliament should approve the Commission proposal.

The committee then adopted the motion for a resolution as a whole unanimously.

The following took part in the vote : Mrs WALZ, chairman; Mr SELIGMAN, vice-chairman; Mr SÄLZER, rapporteur; Mr ADAM, Mr FUCHS, Mr LINKOHR, Mr MARKOPOULOS, Mr MORELAND, Mr PETERSEN, Mr PURVIS, Mr RINSCHE, Mrs VIEHOFF (deputizing for Mrs LIZIN) and Mr VERONESI.

The opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs is attached.

The report was tabled on 4 November 1983.

C O N T E N T S

The Committee on Energy, Research and Technology hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement.

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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

closing the procedure for consultation of the European Parliament on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision on the framework programme for Community scientific and technical activities 1984 to 1987

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission to the Council[1],

- having been consulted by the Council (Doc. 1-395/83),

- with particular reference to its resolution of 10 June 1983 on the proposal from the Commission for a European scientific and technical strategy : framework programme 1984 to 1987 (SÄLZER report)[2],

- having regard to the report by the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology and to the opinion of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (Doc. 1-981/83),

1. Approves the Commission's proposal;

2. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission as Parliament's opinion.

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[1] OJ No. C 169, 29.6.1983, p. 11

[2] OJ No. C 184, 11.7.1983, p. 151

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. On behalf of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology, Mr SALZER, as rapporteur, presented to Parliament in June 1983 a report on the Commission proposal for a European scientific and technical strategy: framework programme 1984 to 1987 (Doc. 1-382/83), which was adopted on 10 June 1983 (1). In paragraph 28 of this resolution, Parliament reserved its final approval until the new Commission proposal had been considered.

2. Before this resolution could be adopted, however, the Commission submitted to the Council a revised version of its proposal, on which Parliament was consulted officially on 2 June 1983. Without waiting for Parliament's opinion, the Council adopted, on 25 July 1983, a resolution on framework programmes for Community research, development and demonstration activities and a first framework programme 1984 to 1987 (2).

3. In the light of both the positive attitude of Parliament's abovementioned resolution of 10 June 1983 towards the Commission's proposal and the Commission's revised proposal, which takes Parliament's wishes into account, the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology decided to raise no objections in spite of its misgivings as to the speed with which the Council had acted.

4. On 20 September 1983, the committee decided unanimously to propose the procedure without report under Rule 99(1) of the Rules of Procedure in order not to delay the entry into force of the framework programme. Five of the six committees asked for their opinion agreed to this procedure; the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, however, delivered an opinion and proposed application of the normal procedure pursuant to Rule 100 of the Rules of Procedure.

5. The Committee on Energy, Research and Technology sees no ground to modify its view in the light of the positive opinion from the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and therefore recommends to Parliament that the Commission proposals be approved.

(1) OJ No. C 184, 11.7.1983, p. 151
(2) OJ No. C 208, 4.8.1983, p. 1

OPINION

(Rule 101 of the Rules of Procedure)
of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

Draftsman: Mrs Théobald-Paoli

At its meeting of 20-21 June 1983, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs appointed Mrs THEOBALD-PAOLI draftsman of an opinion for the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology.

At its meeting of 27-28 September 1983, it was informed that the committee responsible had decided to apply the procedure laid down in Rule 99(1). The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs was unable to accept this decision and requested that the procedure laid down in Rule 100 (procedure with report) be applied, basing its request on Rule 99(3). It adopted the draft opinion unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: Mr Moreau, chairman; Mrs Desouches (introducing the opinion in the absence of the draftsman); Mr Beazley, Mr Beumer (deputizing for Mr Vergeer), Mr von Bismarck, Mr Bonaccini, Mr Damseaux (deputizing for Mr Nordmann), Mr Rogalla (deputizing for Mr Wagner), Mr Van Rompuy, Mr Wedekind (deputizing for Mr Franz) and Mr von Wogau.

INTRODUCTION

1. In December 1982 the Commission forwarded to the Council and to Parliament a communication on a framework programme for Community scientific and technical activities 1984-1987. In May 1983 it submitted to the Council a formal proposal for a decision which also provides additional clarification as requested by the Council.

Since the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs of the European Parliament was not able to consider the first communication, the purpose of the present opinion is to express its views on both proposals.

These proposals are of the greatest importance for the Community's industrial and agricultual future because they make it possible for the first time to get an overall view of the research activities carried on by the Community institution[1].

The new text is in the main similar to that submitted initially with the same order of priorities for Community research, but with certain adjustments to the funds proposed under each heading. In the case of the goal falling most directly within this committee's terms of reference, namely the promotion of industrial competitiveness the details remain unchanged.

GENERAL REMARKS

2. The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs warmly welcomes the fact that the Commission has submitted its first proposals for a framework programme for a European scientific and technical strategy.

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[1] Your draftsman submitted to Parliament a motion for a resolution (Doc. 1-93/82 of 13 April 1983) with a view to ensuring that the Community funds devoted to research are increased and grouped more effectively.

Such a programme highlights the fundamental importance of intensifying research activities at Community level. It provides an opportunity, at last, to define the general criteria for evaluating Community research projects. It makes it possible to start a debate on the order of priority to be adopted for the projects concerned.

3. The Commission has wanted to underline the importance of scientific research for the Community both as a form of 'industry' (it points out that over a million scientific and technical workers including 350,000 research workers, are engaged today in research work in the Community), and as the necessary precondition for the maintenance and improvement of industrial competitiveness. It is of fundamental importance not only for the development of technologies of the future but also for preserving the competitiveness of the more traditional industries and of agriculture.

4. Three major weaknesses in the Community's research activities are revealed by the Commission:

   - Reduction in budgetary resources: in 1968, Community research and development activities alone accounted for 2.5% of the total amount of the Member States' public budgets, whereas they accounted for no more than 2.2% of that total in 1982 (cf COM(83) 260 final p. 88).

   - Inadequacies as regards the exploitation of research results and their adoption in terms of innovation compared with the United States and Japan (cf Annex I, p.6 of the Communication).

   - Duplication of the various research activities carried out at national level. Although, considered overall, the Community's research and development capacity is less than half that of the United States, it is twice that of Japan. However, in the latter country, the activities are more concentrated which makes it easier to avoid duplication.

   Attention is therefore clealy drawn to the need not only to intensify Community research and development work, but also to achieve greater coordination at Community level.

5. The Commission's document reveals the inadequacy of the funds devoted at present to promoting industrial competitiveness. This inadequacy is reflected in an imbalance in the grouping of funds: under 18.5% of the appropriations entered in the Community research budget for 1982 are spent on this objective, whereas over 63.5% go to improving the management of energy resources and reducing energy dependency (although the more rational use of energy in itself constitutes a factor of competitiveness for European economy generally).

CONCLUSIONS

1. Positive aspects of the proposed framework programme

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs fully approves of the Commission's proposal defining a four-year multi-annual programme setting out the scientific and technical objectives to be achieved at Community level, together with the indicative financial breakdown of the Community resources needed for its implementation.

Three features of this proposal are particularly commendable:

- a better evaluation of priorities
- flexible implementation
- greater stress on strengthening industrial competitiveness.

(a) Better evaluation of priorities

In the past Community research and development programmes have been drawn up in too fragmented a manner. The preparation of a framework programme makes it possible to evaluate the various priorities more systematically and in a few years' time to make a more valid comparison between the results achieved and the original objectives. In this context it should be pointed out that the Commission regards the framework programme as a financing guide to allow those responsible for the programming to gauge the relative volume of activities to be undertaken.

(b) Flexible implementation

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs welcomes the flexibility allowed by the proposal in regard to the adaptation of the framework programme and a re-examination of the priorities every two years. Such flexibility is essential in such sectors as the new information technologies in which the pace of development is very fast. It can indeed be difficult to define requirements in different sectors over a period of four years because of:

- the need to adjust the allocation of funds as new requirements are created by scientific discoveries
- the danger that research might be carried out in a particular sector rather than in another simply in order to utilize the appropriations allocated.

(c) Priority given to industrial competitiveness

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs notes with satisfaction in the choice of priorities that the Commission accords more importance than hitherto to research designed to promote industrial competitiveness. The Commission proposes a marked increase in the funds granted to this research sector: it suggests that over 1,000 m ECUs should be allocated to it for the period 1984-1987, as follows:

- 30 million would be granted to improving measurement techniques and the preparation and certifying of reference materials

- 350 million would be granted to improving and developing new techniques and new products for the conventional industries (eg. new materials such as the superalloys and ceramics, the use of lasers and improvement of welding techniques)

- 680 million would be devoted to promoting and developing new technologies (600 million for the new information technologies and 80 million for biotechnology)

In peccentage terms the share of Community funds allocated to research to improve industrial competitiveness would increase from 18.5% to over 28%.

It will be noted with satisfaction that the proposed programme envisages not only promoting the new technologies but also improving the competitiveness of 'conventional' industries.

2. Additional comments by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

(a) It is to be regretted that the sums suggested for the promotion of agricultural competitiveness and the improvement of working conditions - a field in which Community research corresponds closely to the criteria chosen - are not on a more adequate scale.

(b) The committee reiterates its belief in the need to improve the transfer of technology in the Community, in particular by better dissemination of the results of Community research so that all undertakings, including the smallest, and local authorities might be able to benefit from them.

(c) The committee wishes to emphasize that the promotion of industrial competitiveness is one of the fundamental objectives of Europe's revival. which is the subject of work in the 'Special Council' agreed to in Stuttgart. The section of the proposed framework programme concerned with this should be included among the 'new policies' to be defined by the Special Council.

(d) Increasing the budgetary indowments is not sufficient in itself. It must be combined with precise proposals to ensure not only increased coordination of national research programmes but also genuine technological cooperation.

The 'revival' of Europe implies the pooling of certain human and financial resources in the fields of research, investment and production.