

European Communities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

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DOCUMENT 1-931/83

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. 1-110/83 - COM(83)
18 final) for a draft resolution of the Council on
methods of promoting the utilization of the results
of Community-sponsored research and development
programmes

Rapporteur: Mr F. IPPOLITO

PE 86.427/fin.

By letter of 23 March 1983 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 draft resolution of the Council on methods of promoting the utilization of the results of Community-sponsored research and development programmes.

On 11 April 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 Budgets, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, the Committee on External Economic Relations and the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment for their opinions.

On 21 April 1983 the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology appointed Mr IPPOLITO rapporteur.

The committee considered the Commission's proposal at its meetings of 26 May 1983, 30 September 1983 and 17 October 1983.

At the last of these meetings the committee decided unanimously to recommend to the European Parliament that the Commission's proposal be approved.

The committee thus adopted unanimously the whole of the motion for a resolution.

The following took part in the vote: Mrs WALZ, chairman; Mr SELIGMAN, vice-chairman; Mr IPPOLITO, vice-chairman and rapporteur; Mr FUCHS, Mr GALLAND, Mr GHERGO (deputizing for Mr SASSANO), Mr GIUMMARRA (deputizing for Mr PFLIMLIN), Mr K.H. HOFFMANN (deputizing for Mr PEDINI), Mr LINKOHR, Mr MORELAND, Mr NORMANTON, Mr PETERS (deputizing for Mr MARKOPOULOS), Mrs PHLIX, Mr PINTAT, Mr PURVIS, Mr RINSCHKE, Sir Peter VANNECK, Mr VERONESI and Mrs VIEHOFF (deputizing for Mrs LIZIN).

The opinions of the Committee on Budgets, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment are attached.

The Committee on External Economic Relations decided not to deliver an opinion.

The report was tabled on 24.10.1983.

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A

The Committee on Energy and Research hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution:

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 draft resolution of the Council on methods of promoting the utilization of the results of Community-sponsored research and development programmes

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission to the Council (COM(83) 18 final),
 - having been consulted by the Council (Doc. 1-110/83),
 - having regard to the report by the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment (Doc. 1-931/83),
 - having regard to the result of the votes on the Commission's proposal,
1. Considers it essential for the Commission to provide an assessment of these Community activities to ensure that funds are used properly, that the work is of a high scientific standard and that the desired objectives are attained;
 2. Stresses the importance of making the results of research available to potential users, which is a problem involved in all research, wherever and by whomsoever it is carried out;

3. Considers that measures to ensure that fuller use is made of the results of research ought to be closely coordinated and possibly entrusted to the Community body which is conducting the research, and not merely to the Directorate-General for the Information Market and Innovation; whose main task ought to be the collection of data and the comparative analysis of results;
4. Draws attention to the desirability of employing former research staff to publicize the findings made and engage in other activities to ensure that the best possible use is made of the results of the research itself;
5. Draws attention to the importance of the Commission utilizing the services of persons with specialized experience in marketing, in industry, and of patent agents, to serve in an advisory role to improve the take-up by European industry of the results of Community research funding, both direct and indirect;
6. Urges the Commission to set as one of its medium term objectives in Community R & D the desirability of making programmes self-financing through the marketing of patents and licences;
7. Calls for the Commission to report annually to the European Parliament on the progress being made towards greater cost effectiveness of Community R & D programmes and on their acceptance by industry;
8. Requests the Commission to study and report to the European Parliament on the workings of the European patents office and the use made of it as a result of Community R & D funding;
9. Approves the Commission's proposal with the proviso that it should improve and make more efficient the arrangements for making research findings available to potential users who should be identified during and perhaps involved in the research stage;
10. Instructs its President to forward to the Council and the Commission, together with Parliament's opinion, the text of the proposal from the Commission as amended by Parliament, and the corresponding resolution.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. INTRODUCTION

1. This document, which takes the form of a communication, is submitted to the European Parliament by the Commission for it to deliver an opinion, and was drawn up in response to a request by the Council. Its aim is to promote for the benefit of Community users the exploitation of inventions (whether patentable or not) discovered in the course of Community research programmes.

2. The document is divided into four sections, which describe: (i) programme content and objectives, (ii) the legal framework, (iii) methods and (iv) resources for promoting the utilization of the results of Community scientific and technical activities, and the evaluation of the latter.

3. The problem of ensuring that fuller use is made of knowledge gained from research financed by the Community is not new; in fact it could be argued that it has always existed.

Only recently, the Heads of State or Government of the European Community emphasized the importance for the Community of confronting the problem of technical innovation and of the dissemination, commercial exploitation and publication of the results of research.

4. Moreover, the problem of transmitting the results of research from those engaged upon it to potential users is particularly complicated and difficult to solve, even within the individual Member States.

5. Within the limits of the funds available and the sectors explored so far, in the majority of cases the Community's research activities have produced important results which are, in certain fields, of international significance.

6. Although Community research has attained standards and achieved results which are recognized by all, the lead which our main competitors have over us, the scope of the challenges to be met, and the need to make better use of available financial resources force us to aim even higher in future even though we cannot hope to eliminate the inherent difficulties of the problem.

II. MAIN POINTS

7. As is well known, there are two areas in which efforts can be made to ensure that the results of research are applied in practice: the dissemination of information, and the commercial exploitation of such results by industry.

8. The Commission document explores both these possibilities, while considering the problem of how it might make more concerted efforts to ensure that the results of Community research are not wasted.

9. The Commission must take the necessary initiatives to ensure that science and technology in the Member States, and in the Community as a whole, have no weak points or serious shortcomings.

To promote fruitful debate, it is obviously necessary for the Commission to provide an assessment of Community activities in this field to ensure that funds are used properly, that the work meets high scientific standards, and that the desired objectives are attained.

10. So long as its research activities are an integral part of a single overall strategy, the Community can ensure that the results of such research are applied in the economic and/or industrial field by passing regulations to exploit the fruits of its research and development programmes immediately.

11. Two main points may be made with regard to these proposals:

- (a) in general terms, we cannot but agree with the Commission's basic philosophy;
- (b) the weak point of the proposals appears to be the Commission's failure to suggest a precise 'mechanism' whereby the desired results might actually be achieved, namely transmitting research findings to potential users.

12. Moreover, if we look more closely at the Commission's proposals with regard to information as such we note, while recognizing the difficulties involved, that they consist of improving or strengthening the practices already followed in the Community.

13. The suggestions put forward in the document can be broken down into: reports, conferences, and dissemination by means of articles, abstracts or whatever other means may serve to publicize research findings more widely. These are all useful methods of speeding up the flow of information or improving its quality. The unresolved problem is, however, that of identifying and using more effectively the channels of information existing within the individual countries.

14. It would be of great benefit to identify potential users while the research is being carried out or even before it is begun.

III. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL

15. The Commission proposes that 1.5% of total appropriations for research should be devoted to improving the utilization of its results. But, although we approved of the amount of funds allocated, we have certain reserves as to how it is intended to be used.

16. We are not convinced by the arguments for allocating these funds to DG XIII, thus concentrating in the latter all powers and responsibilities in connection with the promotion of industrial applications.

Even if this Directorate had sole responsibility in formal terms, past experience and the very nature of research call for the creation of a flexible and decentralized system whereby end-result users could be identified and involved during the course of research.

17. Every research programme ought to include a final section designed to monitor the results of the research completed and its possible industrial and commercial applications.

18. It would be worthwhile creating a category of officials responsible for supervising research on behalf of the Commission. Their duties would not be restricted, as they are now, to the purely bureaucratic task of supervising the administrative and management aspects of the contractual relations agreed between the Commission and the research contractors, and they would be given much greater influence by being entrusted with the responsibility and the powers to ensure that the fullest possible use was made of the results of the research itself and that the necessary contacts were made with the users in good time.

19. For this purpose the Commission could draw on the often underemployed human resources available within the JRC, particularly among Ispra staff, and also on those research staff who can no longer occupy research posts by virtue of their age, but whose skills could be of great assistance in this field.

20. It is also unnecessary to impose an obligation to draw up 'final reports', since these are almost always a sterile and pointless exercise to satisfy formal requirements and give the impression that something has been 'produced', and practically never have the effect of promoting industrial applications of the research or its commercial exploitation unless there is an immediate follow-up campaign among the users.

21. It follows that measures to improve uptake of the results of research, being an essential part of every research programme, cannot be carried out without the collaboration of the Community services responsible for promoting and financing the research.

22. DG XIII's tasks would then be restricted to data gathering, comparative assessments of the results gained in various sectors, and assisting in the drawing up of research schedules. For these purposes, of course, DG XIII would require less appropriations to be earmarked for it than the amount suggested above. The unused share of the suggested 1.5% could be divided between actions carried out in the context of the various research programmes and which would remain under the supervision of the Directorate responsible.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

23. Subject to these possible amendments, it is reasonable to hope that it would be possible to achieve improved utilization of the results of research by the measures proposed and, in general, we approve of the programme submitted for our opinion.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

Letter from the chairman of the committee to Mrs WALZ, chairman of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology

Luxembourg, 26 September 1983

Dear Mrs Walz,

Re Council communication on promoting the utilization of the results of Community-sponsored research and development (Doc. 1-110/83)
The Committee on Budgets discussed this proposal on 22 September 1983 (1)

It noted that the draft resolution envisages that approximately 1.5% of the Community research and development budget be devoted to promoting the results of the research, but that nevertheless the amounts will be fixed each year during the annual budgetary procedure.

It can thus agree to this programme.

Yours sincerely,

(sgd) Carla Barbarella,
Vice-Chairman,
Committee on Budgets.

(1) Present: Mrs BARBARELLA, Acting Chairman; Mr ADAM (deputizing for Mr BALFE), Mr BALFOUR, Mr BARBI (deputizing for Mr ADONNINO), Mr D'ANGELOSANTE (deputizing for Mr GOUTHIER), Mr FICH, Mr LOUWES, Mr NEWTON DUNN, Mrs SCRIVENER and Mr WOLTJER (deputizing for Mr ARNDT).

OPINION

(Rule 101 of the Rules of Procedure)
of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
Draftsman: Mr ROGALLA

At its meeting of 20/21 April 1983 the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs appointed Mr Rogalla draftsman of an opinion for the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology.

The committee considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 16-18 October 1983 and adopted it unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: Mr MOREAU (chairman and presenter of the opinion in Mr ROGALLA's absence), Mr VON BISMARCK, Mr BONACCINI, Mr I. FRIEDRICH, Mr HERMAN, Mr LEONARDI, Mrs T. NIELSEN (deputizing for Mr DELOROZOY), Mr NORDMANN, Mr OUZOUNIDIS (deputizing for Mrs THEOBALD-PAOLI), Mr VAN ROMPUY, Mr VETTER (deputizing for Mr SCHINZEL) and Mr WELSH.

BACKGROUND

1. The Commission's communication on promoting the utilization of the results of Community-sponsored R and D is one of a series of "horizontal" activities planned by the Commission which are meant to complement specific Community research programmes within the proposed new framework programme for Community scientific and technical activities.
2. The Commission is proposing that a number of new methods be used and activities launched in order to facilitate the achievement of three major sets of objectives
 - better dissemination of information on Community sponsored scientific and technical activities to interested parties throughout the Community;
 - enhanced protection of the results achieved by such activities (such as through computerized or other analyses of patenting trends);
 - enhanced exploitation of the results achieved (through such measures as Community involvement in prototype construction, financial contributions to pilot projects to prove overall industrial viability or use of financial instruments of the Community in a preferential manner to promote diffusion in the economy).

As regards the legal framework the Commission is also proposing to impose somewhat stricter obligations concerning the notification of inventions to the Commission.

Because of the difficulties of attributing Community support on the above lines to individual programmes it is proposed to aggregate Community resources, in order to permit greater flexibility in the allocation of such resources when and where need arises.

The Commission proposes that about 1.5% of the whole Community research and development budget be dedicated to the above activities. The Commission also suggests that it produce an annual report for the Council, the Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on the utilization of the results of Community R and D.

CONCLUSIONS

3. The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs fully supports the main objectives outlined in the Commission's proposal. It considers that better dissemination of information on Community-sponsored scientific and technical activities, accompanied by enhanced protection for and enhanced exploitation of the results achieved through such activities could greatly help to increase the value of Community research.
4. The Committee also welcomes the emphasis placed by the Commission on assisting small and medium-sized enterprises to benefit from such research, but insists that these worthy intentions be rapidly translated into action. Such action has so far been sparse.
5. The Committee further believes that an annual report on the lines of that proposed by the Commission will permit a useful debate on a regular basis on how Community research is being translated into results. The Committee places particular importance on the developing impact of research for the promotion of Community industrial competitiveness, and believes that the Commission should produce an assessment of its effects on particular industrial sectors (although it recognizes, as the Commission points out on page 27 in point 5, that these may not always be easy to identify).
6. The proposals made in the statement are very general in nature, and hardly of the specific kind that needed to be spelled out in detail. Statements such that the Commission is planning to "develop the data base on European Community research so that it covers not only completed research, as is now the case, but also provides short items of information on projected and on-going research" (page 4, point 3.1, second indent) is perfectly valid, but hardly needs to be put forward as a separate proposal. It is also rather sad to read (point 3.1, first indent)

that to "promote more awareness of the research efforts of the Community in the general public" is regarded as "a new or relatively little-used" method of disseminating information. On far too many occasions the document states the obvious, or the over-general.

It could also have provided more concrete examples, such as when it states (on page 20, point 3.3) that a number of proposals have been put into effect on a trial basis. The Parliament will not accept any more such communications unless backed up by specific examples. Community institutions have to serve the citizens of Europe, and not just produce unnecessary paperwork.

7. The Committee would like finally to underline one or two points concerning the financing of the proposals. The objectives of increasing resources devoted to these activities, and to do it on a flexible basis rather than tying resources too closely to individual programmes, seems to be a good one. Nevertheless the Committee notes that in the latest version of the Commission's proposed framework programme for Community scientific and technical activities (COM (83) 260 fin) the Commission is planning to reduce the funds proposed for horizontal activities in general from 110 to 90 million ECU's compared to its original framework proposals. The committee has been informed of the Commission's intention to maintain, within the sum of 90 million ECU to be provided for horizontal activities, that portion set aside for improving the results of research and development financed by the Community.

Finally the Committee puts a strong emphasis on the need to ensure as a general rule the widest possible Community dimension in all research and development activities financed by the Community, by judging projects in proportion to the number of Member States involved, so that those with the widest participation could get special financial priority.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

ANNEX III

COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT

OPINION

Letter from the chairman of the committee to Mrs WALZ, chairman of the
Committee on Energy and Research

Subject : Proposal from the Commission to the Council for a draft resolution of the Council on promoting the utilization of the results of Community sponsored research and development (Doc. 1-110/83)

Dear Madam Chairman,

At its meeting on 25/26 May 1983 the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment considered the Commission proposal referred to above.

The Committee on Social Affairs and Employment points out that

- it considered that this proposal for promoting the utilization of the results of Community sponsored research and development was closely linked to the Communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council containing proposals for a European scientific and technical strategy framework programme 1984/1987 - (Doc. 1-57/83);
- with reference to the demand it has already made concerning this Communication for Community policies in the field of energy and research within the framework of a European social policy plan it supports the Commission's demand that the Community should possess a complete range of instruments so as to be able effectively to promote all stages of the innovatory processes desired;

Furthermore the Committee draws attention to the reports submitted since 1981¹ in which the Committee has especially recently considered at length the social aspects of the problems raised in the proposal. The Committee therefore does not wish to draw up a separate opinion on this matter but would ask the Committee on Energy and Research to consider the social aspects in its report in view of their great significance for the development of Europe.

Yours sincerely,

E. PAPAEFSTRATIOU

Present: Mr Papaefstratiou, chairman; Mr Frischmann, vice-chairman; Mr Alexiadis (substitute member), Mr Bournias (deputizing for Mr McCartin), Mr Calvez, Mr Chanterie, Mr Dalsass (deputizing for Mrs Cassanmagnago Cerretti), Mr Davern (deputizing for Miss de Valera), Mr Estgen, Mrs Maij-Weggen, Mr Patterson, Mrs Pauwelyn, Mr Tuckman and Mr Vgenopoulos (deputizing for Mr Charzat).

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- ¹ - Mrs SALISCH - on the repercussions of energy problems and technological developments on the level of employment in the Communities -
Doc. 1-164/81, OJ C 260, 12.10.81
- Mr PAPAEFSTRATIOU - on the employment policy in the European Community in preparation for the November 1982 meeting of the 'Jumbo' Council -
Doc. 1-646/82, OJ C 292, 8.11.82
- Mr NIELSEN - on the communication from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council on vocational training and new information technologies : new Community initiatives during the period 1983 - 1987
- on the draft resolution of the Council concerning training policies in the European Communities in the 1980s - Doc. 1-1363/82/I
- Mrs SALISCH - on the problem of youth unemployment - Doc. 1-86/83
- Mr PAPAEFSTRATIOU - on the employment situation in the European Community
- Doc. 1-87/83

27.5.1983

PE 86.427/fin./Ann.III

