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DOCUMENT 1-753/83

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. 1-522/83 - COM(83) 327 final) for a Council Decision adopting a research programme to be implemented by the Joint Research Centre for the European Atomic Energy Community and for the European Economic Community (1984-1987)

Rapporteur: Mr R. LINKOHR

PE 85.104/fin.

By letter of 1 July 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 (Doc. 1-522/83 - COM(83) 327 final) for a Council Decision adopting a research programme to be implemented by the Joint Research Centre for the European Atomic Energy Community and for the European Economic Community (1984-1987).

On 6 July 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 for an opinion.

On 16 May 1983 and 6 June 1983 respectively, the motion for a resolution by Mr PURVIS and Mr SELIGMAN (Doc. 1-232/83) and that by Mr SASSANO and others (Doc. 1-377/83) were referred to the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology.

At its meeting of 19 January 1983, the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology appointed Mr LINKOHR rapporteur.

The committee considered the Commission's proposal and the draft report at its meetings of 24 March, 29 April, 20 June and 21 September 1983.

At the last meeting, the committee decided with 17 votes in favour and 6 abstentions to recommend to Parliament that it approve the Commission's proposal without amendment.

The committee then adopted the motion for a resolution as a whole with 17 votes in favour and 6 abstentions.

The following took part in the vote: Mr SELIGMAN, acting chairman; Mr LINKOHR, rapporteur; Mr ADAM, Mr ARNDT (deputizing for Mr PETERSEN), Mr BERNARD, Mr CABORN (deputizing for Mr PERCHERON), Mr GHERGO (deputizing for Mr SASSANO), Mr NORMANTON, Mr HERMAN (deputizing for Mrs WALZ), Mr KAZAZIS (deputizing for Mr RINSCHÉ), Mrs LIZIN, Mr MARCK (deputizing for Mr K. FUCHS), Mr MORELAND, Mr PEDINI, Mr PETRONIO, Mr PFLIMLIN, Mrs PHLIX, Mr PURVIS, Mr ROGALLA, Mr ROGERS (deputizing for Mr HALLIGAN), Mr SCHMID, Mr SEAL (deputizing for Mr GALLAGHER), Mr VANDEMEULEBROUCKE (deputizing for Mr CAPANNA) and Mr VERONESI.

The opinion of the Committee on Budgets will be published separately.

This report was tabled on 23 September 1983.

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A.

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 Council Decision adopting a research programme to be implemented by the Joint Research Centre for the European Atomic Energy Community and for the European Economic Community (1984-1987)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission to the Council (COM(83) 327 final),
- having been consulted by the Council (Doc. 1-522/83),
- having regard to the motion for a resolution by Mr PURVIS and Mr SELIGMAN (Doc. 1-232/83),
- having regard to the motion for a resolution by Mr SASSANO and others (Doc. 1-377/83),
- having regard to Parliament's previous reports and resolutions on European research policy, in particular
 - on the proposals for a European scientific and technical strategy (framework programme 1984-1987) (SÄLZER report)¹,
 - on the problems and prospects of the common research policy (LINKOHR report)²,
- having regard to the assessment study commissioned by the Court of Auditors of the European Communities on the scientific activities of the Joint Research Centre,
- following the talks between Parliament and officials of the trade unions represented in the Joint Research Centre,

¹ OJ No. C 284, 11.7.1983, p. 151

² OJ No. C 334, 20.12.1982, p.96

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology and the opinion of the Committee on Budgets (Doc. 1-753/83),
 - having regard to the result of the vote on the Commission's proposal,
1. Emphasizes the importance of direct research to the European Community and supports the continuation of the activities of the Joint Research Centre (JRC);
 2. Welcomes wholeheartedly the Commission proposal for a new multi-annual research programme, since this covers essential elements of safety and environmental research;
 3. Hopes however that the JRC will in subsequent years gradually take up other research topics in the fields of safety and environmental preservation;
 4. Calls for an enlargement of the tasks assigned to encompass aspects of biological, chemical and information technology research, as recommended for instance in FAST I;
 5. Requests that a more judicious balance be struck between nuclear and non-nuclear research; recognizes however that, owing to its high costs and global European significance, and on the grounds of important safety and political considerations, high priority will continue to be assigned to nuclear safety in the future;
 6. Calls for a suitable application of the findings of nuclear safety research to risk research in other sectors of industry;
 7. Calls further for an appropriate response to the criticism expressed in the report commissioned by the Court of Auditors on the JRC, most notably
 - the lack of cooperation among the four JRC establishments, between the JRC and industry or national research institutes,
 - the small number of scientific publications,
 - the inappropriate staff policy,
 - the insufficient evaluation of research findings;

8. Voices its conviction that the JRC would achieve better results if the individual research teams were allowed greater organizational autonomy and more room for manoeuvre within agreed limits as regards financing arrangements;
9. Calls therefore for a radical dismantling of bureaucratic obstacles;
10. Calls for a more dynamic staff policy, to include the following elements:
 - possibility of voluntary early retirement,
 - transfer of JRC staff to other Commission departments,
 - better promotion prospects,
 - renewal of temporary contracts solely on the basis of specialist qualifications,
 - grants to young researchers and technicians,
 - international exchange of scientists;
11. Takes the view that elected representatives of the staff should also sit on the Council of Administration proposed by the Commission;
12. Is opposed to the acquisition of major items of machinery for the JRC, unless it can be proved that these are compatible with the above-mentioned aims of direct research;
13. Believes the proposal on a tritium testing laboratory to be sound and suggests that such a laboratory be set up at Ispra;
14. Endorses the programme proposed by the Commission on condition that in the course of the next four years account is taken in the programme of the recommendations of the European Parliament and the Court of Auditors, and calls on the Commission to submit by the end of 1985 a progress report on its efforts in this direction;
15. Instructs its President to forward to the Council, the Commission and the representatives of the staff of the Joint Research Centre, as Parliament's opinion, the Commission's proposal as voted by Parliament and the corresponding resolution.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. This report aims to define what in the opinion of the rapporteur should be the guidelines for the activity of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) over the next two decades. He bases his reasoning on experience to date with the JRC, on the report of the Court of Auditors and follows the line expressed in European Parliament decisions on Community research policy. Due account has been taken of both the Commission's proposal and the talks with JRC staff representatives.
2. The rapporteur takes as his premise the assumption that the European Community should carry out research in its own research centres and in principle he is therefore in favour of the Joint Research Centre remaining in existence. He would like to encourage the researchers and their assistants to continue working for the benefit of the Community. Rumours of a crisis or the closing down of the JRC should be strongly refuted, for it is impossible to work calmly and with continuity with a question mark hanging over one's work.
3. This, in fact, touches on one of the main questions concerning the JRC - the uncertainty about projects and the frequent changes of theme. In places where the research objectives have been clearly stated and projected over a long period, as in Karlsruhe, Petten and Geel, those concerned have been able to work steadily and successfully, without disruption. But where there have been several changes in regard to objectives, as in Ispra, uncertainty and confusion have been inevitable. If despite this there have been substantial successes this is to the credit of the scientists and their staff. However, the lesson to be drawn is that continuity and consistency are necessary preconditions for successful research.

The work of the Joint Research Centre is not, however, viewed favourably by all observers or in every country. For instance, the small number of patents and publications is criticized, as too are the translation and excessive bureaucracy. The European Parliament must also examine the grounds for this criticism. Some of these shortcomings are undoubtedly due to the lack of continuity in the objectives prescribed.

4. In its next multi-annual research programme the Commission must try to place greater emphasis on continuity. It should recognize the importance of having clearly-defined objectives. The researchers and their staff should know exactly what their role is so that they can work on their own responsibility and within the financial parameters laid down.

5. Over the years, the Joint Research Centre - originally set up to develop a nuclear reactor - has tackled new projects which are embodied in some form or other in Community policy. If one wished to describe its future role more precisely, safety could well serve as the overall concept - safety not in the military sense but as a definition of one of the principal tasks of our time. It comprises the development of technical standards and devices to protect man and his natural environment from the dangers resulting from the use of modern technology. But it also comprises modes of behaviour we have to adopt when dealing with technology. Lastly, it comprises the general question of how Europeans come to terms with this technology, its products and its processes.

No one would seriously deny that this is a task for the Community. Common environmental and safety measures are not only an ecological requirement, they also follow from the content and meaning of the Treaties. For without common standards and norms no internal market can survive. And it is difficult to monitor standards and norms without common assessment and control procedures.

6. The Joint Research Centre is, therefore, not a development centre for new products and processes - this is a task best left to the appropriate commercial undertakings - but a testing station to measure and assess the extent to which these products and processes are compatible with man and nature. Many of the JRC's programmes already come under this heading. Now it is simply a case of reinforcing this aspect of its work.

7. In this respect the JRC differs from most national research centres, which are often concerned with the development of a single product or one large piece of machinery. The JRC's activity covers a cross-section of research and it should above all tackle those matters which span national borders in the geographical sense.

8. Some examples will show what is meant. They are not listed in any particular order and the list is not intended to be complete:

- the development of suitable measuring procedures to ensure uniform testing throughout the Community of motor vehicle exhaust gases
- the development of practicable rules for the transport of dangerous substances and waste
- procedures and methods for eliminating or treating waste of all kinds
- the study and reduction of risks arising in nuclear installations, chemical factories and biological laboratories
- the collecting and storing of data on safety and the environment
- the development of measuring procedures and methods to assess the impact of products and production processes on the environment.

9. It is not always necessary for the research work to be carried out on the spot, that is to say in the JRC's laboratories. Work could be farmed out to other centres with relevant experience. What is important is that the JRC should be responsible for coordinating it.

10. It is because our modern civilization is bedevilled with undreamt-of risks and because we can no longer afford to proceed on a trial-and-error basis for the sake of our very existence that there must be an arbitration body to reduce the risks inherent in technology to a socially acceptable level. We know full well that we cannot completely rule out the risk factor except by entirely renouncing the use of this or that technology, but we can find technical ways and means of reducing the chances of disaster and accident to a minimum.

The predominant objective of the JRC must, therefore, be risk reduction, in other words, safety. In this the rapporteur sees a genuinely European task.

11. If one accepts this basic idea, suggestions about bringing a large apparatus to Ispra only make sense insofar as they serve this purpose. Anyway, it would be more useful to ignore the idea of a large apparatus for the time being and concentrate instead on building up small, flexible working groups to look at the different aspects of safety. Let it be said in passing that none of the proposals which are rumoured to be circulating sound convincing. Nor is there any proof that research centres depend for their existence on the presence of large apparatuses. If, however, it were to emerge that a large item of equipment could serve the above-mentioned objectives, then the relevant proposal should be seriously considered and, if appropriate, acted on.

12. The Commission's proposal contains a number of important elements for environmental and safety research of a trans-frontier, European nature. Broadly speaking, all the individual programmes can be classified under this heading, apart from the management of energy in dwellings which, in the opinion of the rapporteur, could be carried out more appropriately on a national basis, but in respect of which the Community has clearly made a commitment at international level.

It is of course striking that nuclear activities continue to swallow up the Lion's share with 73%, while non-nuclear safety and environmental research remain under-endowed. The Commission has admittedly reduced the share of nuclear research by about 8% - although this is one direct consequence of the abandonment of the Super-SARA project.

Emphasis should continue to be placed on nuclear safety research in the future, not least because the JRC has gained a great deal of experience in this field. Yet if the JRC is to fulfil its role as a European safety research centre, then it must broaden out its experience in the field of nuclear physics to embrace new activities from other disciplines, such as chemistry and biology. The knowledge gained in the field of systems technology may be very useful here.

13. It is unlikely that a shift in the emphasis of the JRC towards major aspects of safety and environmental research - to the total exclusion of product development - will occur in the short term. This will require infrastructural changes - in respect of personnel and establishments. On the other hand, what is needed is not so much a break with previous activity as a policy of continuous expansion and adjustment.

It is therefore recommended that such expansion be carried in the course of the next multi-annual programme, to gradually encompass new activities and with the corresponding increase in staff complement.

14. However, to fulfil these tasks the JRC needs not only a clearly defined overall purpose but also a flexible structure. With its proposals for improving the decision-making procedure the Commission is on the right track. All the same, it would be as well if the JRC could work to a large extent independently of the Commission within the framework of its assignments. One cannot avoid the impression today that the administration of the JRC has become over-bureaucratic. Recently, indeed, Mr VERONESI, a Member of the European Parliament, drew attention in a written question to the Commission to a staff notice signed by G.R. BISHOP with the number LS/NS/12/82 on 'relations with the European Parliament', informing the staff of the research stations that any contacts or meetings between officials and staff and Members of the European Parliament must be the subject of a report to be submitted to the Director of the Research Centre, Mr T.A. DINKESPILER'. The procedure is related in the Official Journal of the European Communities of 9 May 1983.

One can only hope for the sake of the JRC that it receives the fewest possible visitors from the ranks of the European Parliament, so that the scientists have time to do other things than write and read such reports. It would certainly be better if such instructions were to disappear. This may be a single instance, but it reflects the difficulty facing administered research. No wonder the results suffer.

15. The rapporteur has so far had a series of talks with Commission officials, the Joint Research Centre and the unions represented there. These have given rise to a number of suggestions, albeit not entirely compatible with each other, from which the rapporteur has drawn up his own list of proposals:
- The over-planning should be phased out, thus creating greater flexibility. The departments' financial margin for manoeuvre should be widened.

- In the Administrative Council proposed by the Commission the scientists and their staff should be represented by their own elected representatives.
- It is regrettable that the work on thermo-chemical hydrogen production should have been halted. It is to be hoped that the work can be continued in a national research laboratory.
- The establishment of a tritium laboratory is both realistic and right. This could substantially enhance research on nuclear fusion.
- The financing of the high-flow reactor (HFR) in Petten should continue as before, that is to say, by co-financing by the Netherlands and the Federal Republic. However, the relationship between the work on HFR in Petten and the Belgian counterpart BR 2 needs to be clarified.
- Staff mobility should be encouraged. A financially worthwhile offer should be made to workers who wish to leave the JRC prematurely, to make their departure easier. At the same time young people should be recruited and assigned new tasks.
- In view of the present position on the employment market greater mobility can only be expected if there is greater interchange of personnel between universities, the JRC and industry. At the same time chances of professional promotion must be improved.
- The possibility of improving openings for voluntary workers and trainees must be examined. Schemes enabling young scientists to work for a time in the JRC should be stepped up. Steps to satisfy labour requirements must be taken insofar as this has not already been done.
- There is scope for improving the social facilities. If Ispra were increasingly to become a place where Community workers could meet scientists from the Third World, as one would hope, a hotel would have to be built.

- Climate research should occupy a permanent place in the research programme. The JRC might, for example, devote more attention to the problem of the increasing carbon dioxide content of the atmosphere.
- As regards other proposals for research programmes, a glance at the evaluation report of the FAST team is extremely informative. It is regrettable that the recommendations of the FAST team are not reflected in the Commission's working document. It would be more in line with the criteria set out above for the JRC to tackle, for example, the following questions:
 - the overlap area between information technologies and biotechnology (measuring procedures, data banks)
 - storage of biotic material (collection of micro-organisms, hybrids, plant and animal cells, viruses etc.)
 - creation of a seed bank.

These and other proposals are to be found in the FAST document. There is no need to list them again here.

- Apart from physical and chemical subjects, the biological field must also be dealt with step by step. There is a case for setting up a new working group. Some research themes have already been suggested above.

16. To sum up, our main recommendations are as follows:

- (a) Just as the national major research institutions in the field of nuclear energy no longer see their task as merely developing new energy-producing systems, but creating the technical and scientific preconditions for dealing with the consequences of nuclear energy production (safety, protection against radiation, treatment and storage of radioactive waste), so must the JRC not confine itself to industrial product development or abstract pure research, but tackle those aspects of safety research which are transnational in a geographical sense. This task cannot be carried out by any single national institution. This would give the JRC a clear objective for the coming decade.

- (b) When new programme objectives are being adopted the recommendations of the FAST Group should also be taken into account. Apart from research in the field of physics and chemistry a biological division should also be set up.
- (c) The excessive bureaucracy, which has so often been criticized, must be dismantled by making the Centre less dependent on the Council and Commission. The Commission should keep the JRC on a loose rather than a tight rein. More autonomy can only be good for research.
- (d) At present there is no need for large machines or apparatus. The JRC should concentrate funds and capacity for the present on further extending the safety aspect.
- (e) The JRC needs confidence and continuity. Rumours and those responsible for them should be clearly refuted. The European Parliament declares its support for the Joint Research Centre and assures all its staff that they are needed and that they are doing Europe a worthwhile service.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (DOCUMENT 1-232/83)

tabled by Mr PURVIS and Mr SELIGMAN

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on multiannual programme for the Joint Research Centre 1984-1987

The European Parliament,

- A. noting that the resources of the Joint Research Centre will no longer be used for the Super Sara Project,
- B. noting the approval of the Council, 10th March 1983, of the programme guidelines proposed by the Commission for the period 1984 - 1987 and the intention of the Commission to communicate proposals during June 1983,
- C. noting the intention of the Council to make its choice of research activities on the basis of these proposals,
 1. Emphasises its determination to influence the choice of research activities undertaken at the Joint Research Centre;
 2. Calls upon the Commission and Council to institute immediately consultation with its competent Committee while proposals are still at the drafting stage;
 3. Reminds the Commission of the position of the Council that decisions must be taken with an eye to the schedule for the 1984 budgetary procedure;
 4. Calls upon the Commission to draw up a short list of major research activities of necessary scale which are appropriate to a programme of direct research in the Community, and to communicate this list to Parliament and Council;
 5. Calls upon its competent committee to define Parliament's priorities for the Multiannual Programme for the Joint Research Centre 1984 - 1987;
 6. Instructs its President to communicate this motion for resolution to the Commission and Council of the European Communities.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (DOCUMENT 1-377/83)

tabled by Mr SASSANO, Mr PEDINI, Mr ADONNINO, Mr VERONESI, Mr PETRONIO
and Mr SELIGMAN

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure

on the multiannual programme of the Joint Research Centre (1984-1987)

The European Parliament,

- A. having regard to the fact that on 10 March 1983 the Council adopted the guidelines proposed by the Commission for the four-year (1984-1987) programme of the JRC,
 - B. having regard to the resolution tabled by Mr SASSANO (Doc. 1-1080/81) and adopted by Parliament on 12 March 1982 (OJ C 87/1981),
 - C. having regard to the favourable opinion unanimously adopted by the panel of experts asked by the Commission at the specific request of Parliament to pronounce on the desirability of carrying out the IGNITOR thermonuclear fusion project,
1. Calls on the Commission to put forward practical proposals for the study of the IGNITOR project within the framework of the multiannual programme (1984-1987) of the JRC now being drawn up;
 2. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.

