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THIRD REPORT

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

on the ~~progress~~ progress necessary in Community research: assessment of the activities of the JRC from 1958 to 1972

Rapporteur: Mr Gerhard FLÄMIG

PE 39.106/fin.

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English Edition

By letter of 4 April 1973 the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology requested authorization to draw up a report on the progress necessary in Community research.

Authorization was given by the President of the European Parliament in his letter of 16 April 1973.

On 17 May 1973 the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology appointed Mr FLÄMIG rapporteur.

In the same context and following on from the two previous interim reports (Doc. 219/73 and Doc. 161/74) the committee instructed Mr FLÄMIG on 19 November 1974 to draw up a third report assessing the activities of the JRC from 1958 to 1972.

It considered the draft of the third report at its meeting of 17 December 1974 and 11 February 1975.

At its meeting of 11 February 1975, the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology adopted the motion for a resolution and the explanatory statement unanimously with one abstention.

Present: Mr Springorum, chairman; Mr Leonardi, vice-chairman; Mr Flämig, rapporteur, Lord Bessborough, Mr Burgbacher, Mr Covelli, Mr De Keersmaecker (deputizing for Mr Ney), Mr Hougardy, Mr Krall, Mr Müller, Mr Pintat, Mr Vandewiele and Mr Vetrone (deputizing for Mr Andreotti).

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

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the assessment of the activities of the Joint Research Centre from 1958 to 1972

The European Parliament,

- having regard to past resolutions on the position and development of the Joint Research Centre, which concerned in particular
 - the future of the Joint Research Centre and the setting up of a multiannual research and training programme,¹
 - the progress necessary in Community research and the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council (Doc. 89/74) for a revision of the multiannual research programme;²
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology assessing the activities of the Joint Research Centre from 1958 to 1972; (Doc. 511/74),
 1. Points out that it has been following the development of the Joint Research Centre for many years and has warned against allowing it to continue to exist without being assigned appropriate and clearly defined research projects;
 2. Welcomes the fact that following the Council's decisions of 14 May and 18 June 1973, the Commission made provision for the staff required to allow the JRC to make a new start and submitted a programme capable of further development and extended to include the non-nuclear field;
 3. Calls on the Council and Commission to ensure that the necessary materials, staff and finances are available so that the JRC may continue to work successfully;

¹ OJ No. C 112 of 27 October 1972, p. 19

² OJ No. C 93 of 7 August 1974, p. 85

4. Cautions against another failure in direct Community research since the European Parliament would then be faced with the difficulty of deciding whether further funds should be made available for the continued operation of the Joint Research Centre;
5. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the committee's report to the Council and Commission of the European Communities.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. INTRODUCTION

1. The European Parliament has already on numerous occasions considered the problem of the Community research conducted at the Joint Research Centre. The consistent position found in all the resolutions adopted by the European Parliament emphasizes the necessity for the Community to have available its own research instrument, with sufficient resources to be able to contribute effectively to the scientific and technical development of Europe.

The reason for which the European Parliament made so many statements of its position, amounting to warnings, was the constant deterioration of the situation at the JRC. In 1971-1972 this deterioration even reached the point where the total abandonment of Community-controlled research could reasonably be feared.

2. It is well known that the Council's February 1973 decision adopting the principle of a new multi-annual research programme finally restored hope to the supporters of Community research. The details of this programme were laid down in two Council decisions adopted in May and June 1973.

In a resolution submitted by our committee, the European Parliament welcomed the fact that 'after many years of inadequate provisional measures the Council has, for the first time since 1967, committed itself to a pluriannual research programme and put joint research on a sound, though very limited, initial footing'¹.

In a further resolution adopted on 12 July 1974, the European Parliament indicated its agreement in principle to the proposals for the revision of the multiannual research programme².

3. The definition and adoption of a research programme for the JRC was a precondition for the continued existence of direct Community research.

Our committee was nevertheless aware that by itself the adoption of this programme was insufficient to give a new impetus to the JRC. For that the Commission would have to take a number of urgent supplementary measures, in fields as varied as the management of research projects and the administration of the JRC to enable the programme to be carried out in the best possible conditions. Putting the programme into operation was rendered all the more difficult by the fact that not only was the staff complement reduced, a move that had already been decided by the Council, but the application of the voluntary retirement scheme to the JRC also resulted in about one hundred research-workers leaving.

¹Motion for a resolution submitted by Mr Springorum on behalf of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology (Doc. 304/72) Resolution: OJ C14, 27 March 1973

²Flämig Report (Doc. 161/74)
Resolution: OJ C93, 7 August 1974.

4. Our committee notes with satisfaction that the Commission has finally, through the intermediary of the present JRC management team, got down to taking the decisions necessary to make the JRC a valuable instrument, recognised as such by the Member States.

These restructuring measures and decisions are all the more urgent because the JRC is at present at a turning point in its history, both as regards research, since the new programme makes adaptation to non-nuclear research projects necessary, and because by contrast with the position until only recently the JRC is now run according to modern management concepts.

Every effort taken to make this transformation a success must be encouraged. Moreover, the fact that the new JRC management has taken as one of its priority tasks the restoration of confidence between the partners at all levels (at the Council level, at the level of the JRC establishments, and at that of the research staff) is in the view of our committee a promising and encouraging sign for the future.

5. Our committee is fully aware that it would be premature to make a final judgment on the scope and results of the present will towards change and a return to order. Such an evaluation can really only be made once the various measures have had time to get going. That is why our committee proposes to submit a subsequent report to the European Parliament containing its position and observations on the practical results of the relaunching of Community research at the JRC. Our committee intends in that report to look more closely at some research projects now being carried out at the JRC in order to evaluate their interest and their results.

6. To clear the ground for the debate in the European Parliament when that report is submitted, our committee considered that it would be useful and interesting to make a general assessment of the JRC, containing an analysis of its development, criticizing the mistakes that have been made and clearly assigning responsibility for them. That is the intention of this report.

II. Assessments of Community research at the JRC

(a) The aims of the Euratom Treaty

7. When they ratified the Euratom Treaty, the Member States hoped that the implementation of certain of its provisions would lay the groundwork for a European nuclear research programme and thus of a nuclear industry able to stand up to that of countries more experienced in this field. This objective is found right from the first chapter, 'promotion of research'. The first Article of that chapter gives the Commission responsibility for 'promoting and facilitating nuclear research in the Member States and for complementing it by carrying out a Community research and training programme' (Article 4).

The Commission was instructed to establish a Joint Nuclear Research Centre to implement the research programmes. The centre was also to ensure that a uniform nuclear terminology and a standard system of measurements were established. Finally, it was to set up a central bureau for nuclear measurements (Article 8).

8. But the Treaty did not merely set out a framework for the developments of nuclear research, which the institutions could then implement. It went much further, since it laid down a first multiannual research programme and provided the funds to carry it out. Article 215 provides that 'an initial research and training programme, which is set out in Annex V to this Treaty and the cost of which shall not, unless the Council unanimously decides otherwise, exceed 215 million EPU units of account, shall be carried out within five years of the entry into force of this Treaty'.

9. It is appropriate to stress once more the clarity of the objective the Member States set themselves and the extent of the means with which they equipped themselves when they ratified the Euratom Treaty.

The Treaty pursues a single goal, the creation of a powerful nuclear industry in the Community. It does so through the establishment of the Joint Research Centre and through research contracts placed with the national centres.

(b) Establishment of the structures and initiation of the first multiannual research programme

10. In the initial research and training programme described in Annex V of the Treaty the accent was placed, apart from documentation and information projects, on the design and construction of reactor prototypes and on the construction of a reactor with a high fast-neutron flux for the testing of materials under irradiation.

The programme also provided that the research project could be carried out either directly by the JRC or under contract outside it.

11. Implementation of this programme began in 1958. By contracting out certain parts of the programme to national centres, the Commission avoided having to postpone them until the JRC was set up, especially since there were numerous problems, particularly regarding site choice. It was not until well into 1959 that decisions in principle were taken. On the basis of proposals from interested governments, the Commission decided to set up JRC establishments at Ispra, Petten, Karlsruhe and Mol. Thus, the Central Bureau for nuclear measurements provided for by the Treaty was set up at Mol, while research into the transuranium elements was entrusted to the Karlsruhe establishment. As for the Petten establishment, while it had general responsibilities, its activities were centered on the high-flux reactor (HFR).

12. Finally, an agreement concluded in July 1959 (which was not to come into force until 1 September 1960) enabled the most important JRC establishment to be set up at Ispra. The agreement laid down not only the details for transferring the centre but also the conditions for its development and the arrangements for collaboration between Commission staff and personnel of the Italian national nuclear research centre. It also provided for establishment staff to reach 1500 by 31 December 1962.

With the JRC open, the Commission had available four choices for carrying out the programme, to wit:

- the JRC establishments,
- supplementary contracts,
- joint undertakings,
- cooperation with third countries and bodies.

(c) The Orgel project: an essential element in the first two research programmes (1959-1963, 1964-1968)

13. In 1959, on the view that the independent line of heavy-water moderated natural-uranium primary reactors was the most promising one, the Commission and the Council opted for it. The development of a natural-uranium reactor was aimed at making Europe independent of supplies of enriched uranium from the United States (enriched uranium for use in light-water reactors).

In its 1961 general report, the Commission stated that its direct effort was concerned with Orgel type natural-uranium, heavy-water moderated, organically-cooled reactors. It announced that design studies on a special test reactor (Essor) were under way.

14. This choice was to determine the lines of direct Community research and the way the JRC was to develop, for almost 10 years, that is to say for the period of two five-year research programmes.

From 1959 to 1967, Community research did in fact have a clearly defined objective and enjoyed the total support of the Member States. Ispra's scientific potential was 60-80% devoted to the Orgel project. To gain an idea of the order of magnitude of the effort made it is sufficient to recall that the appropriations under the second programme were 458.7 million u.a., 224.8 million u.a. of which were for the direct projects. During this period, the Essor test reactor and the Eco materials testing reactor were constructed at Ispra.

15. From 1967 to 1968, however, it became clear that the European electricity supply undertakings had opted for the American type of light-water enriched-uranium reactor. Faced with this new situation, the Member States abandoned development of heavy-water natural-uranium reactors, meaning the end of the Orgel project and thus of the core of the second five-year research programme.

16. It seems useful to stress at this point that though for 'political' reasons the Orgel project was not to be completed, it is nevertheless the case that the research carried on at the JRC under the first two five-year programmes was unanimously recognized as valuable and effective, thanks particularly to optimal utilization of the staff's high qualifications.

(d) The JRC's crisis period (1968-1972)

17. The failure of the Orgel project marked the beginning of a long crisis in Community research. The first cause of this crisis was the fact that there was no new pilot research project to replace the Orgel project. The Member States' attitude to Community research, which was the reason for this failure, prevented the working out and adoption of a new multiannual programme. From 1968 to 1972 the Council of Ministers contented itself with giving the JRC annual programmes to keep it going. The only aim of these was to prevent the closure of the JRC, which would have taken more courage than the Council had. Thus, a programme limited to a single financial year, 1969, was adopted by the Council on 20 December 1968. The appropriations for this mini-programme were restricted to 24.09 million u.a. for the joint programme and 24.60 million u.a. for the supplementary programme. The situation became steadily worse as years passed, until in 1972 only 15.08 million u.a. was earmarked for the joint programme (with an additional 25.5 million u.a. for the supplementary programme). This amounted to letting Community research go by default while avoiding direct responsibility. Moreover, this attitude was in total contradiction with the European Parliament's frequently expressed wish for a new start. It was an unreasonable position and a hard psychological blow to many of the scientific and technical staff. A large number of scientists and technicians had given up promising careers in national establishments or private companies to follow the call of Europe. Now they were disappointed.

III. The state of Community research from 1968 to 1972

18. The Council's irresponsible attitude brought about a real process of disintegration of Community research at the JRC. We have already said that the lack of political will brought with it the lack of a genuine research programme. With no clearly defined objective recognized as important for the Community by the Member States, it was inevitable that

over this very difficult period the JRC would be the object of polemics regarding its suitability for bringing about progress in Community research.

The resulting situation was not only deplorable but so complex that it is difficult to distinguish its causes and effects. We shall nevertheless attempt to analyse it and draw the necessary lessons.

19. At least three levels can be distinguished in the Community research crisis:

- a political crisis, expressed in the lack of confidence in the scope and effectiveness of Community research and in the consequent short funding;
- a crisis of efficiency in direct Community research;
- a crisis in the management and administration of the JRC.

(a) The political crisis

20. We have already mentioned the political attitude which led to the failure of the Orgel project. Let us say again, however, that if conviction is already lacking at the political stage, the effects of this indecision will obviously be felt when it comes to implementation.

Moreover, the Council's vacillation and laxity engendered an atmosphere of uncertainty unfavourable to Community research.

The solution the Council adopted for the whole period from 1968 to 1972 was without doubt the worst one. Either direct Community research and with it the JRC should have been buried, or it should have been assigned a precise role to meet a clearly recognized Community need, and furnished with adequate funds.

(b) The inefficiency in direct Community research

21. The abandonment of the Orgel project brought a fall in the JRC's efficiency, due only partly to the fact that so many people including many of the best people, left. It is obvious that staff worries about their future, and rumours of closure or regrouping of some establishments could not favour the maintenance of an atmosphere conducive to research work.

22. Other reasons for which the JRC was more directly responsible can also be put forward for this loss of efficiency.

In the first place, the JRC's lack of a public relations policy made it unable to build an image in the scientific world. Rather the opposite: the JRC, especially the Ispra establishment, let their reputation deteriorate to a point where contacts with national or public centres were becoming rarer and rarer. This significantly reduced the exchange of information necessary in any research work.

23. The JRC was made still less able to keep its output up with that of comparable centres by often injudicious recruitment, following numerous resignations. Finally the organization of the scientific staff on civil service lines was condemned as an error and as neglect of the principle of mobility which ought to govern the organization of research.

24. In the case of Ispra, efficiency was still further reduced by poor cooperation between the various scientific departments. Moreover, this establishment was by far the most affected by the inefficiency phenomenon, since the abandonment of the Orgel project concerned it directly. The establishments at Mol, Karlsruhe, and to a lesser extent Petten, retained

their work areas and were therefore less subject to the developments described above, and to those described in the following paragraph.

(c) The JRC management and administration crisis

25. In the critical situation direct Community research was going through, firm and resolute management of the JRC was essential if there was to be any chance of putting a stop to the disintegration. Unfortunately for Community research, both the Commission and the management of the establishments acted in a hesitant and often contradictory manner. Instead of defining once and for all a renewal plan capable of getting the Member States interested, the JRC management and the Commission worked out a series of preliminary proposals, none of which came to anything.

This inability to draw the lessons from a setback and to define a new objective for direct Community research within an overall research concept certainly contributed to the length of the JRC's crisis.

26. As regards the JRC management as such, there was, especially at the Ispra establishment, a dilution of decision, responsibility and control. The situation became more and more confused and inexplicable, to the detriment of the credibility of Community research. Furthermore, the administrative rules applied made healthy and efficient administration of the JRC practically impossible. Applying these administrative rules often took more staff time than research work. In these conditions it was only to be expected that the JRC's reputation among the Member States and among other research centres became seriously tarnished.

27. As far as personnel administration is concerned, a number of problems arose and then became serious at Ispra without the Commission being capable of either taking the necessary measures or proposing them to the Council. On several occasions, our committee condemned as antisocial the discrimination made between different categories of personnel in similar jobs. Likewise, the position of the people without hire contracts (the 'appaltati') inevitably stirred up an unpleasant atmosphere in the establishments.¹ The continuation of these problems only accentuated the tension between the JRC staff and the management and thus finally destroyed the relations of trust between the partners.

¹ It was not until 1974 that a start was made in solving these problems.

IV. Conclusions

28. It is not our committee's objective in making this assessment of the state of Community research from 1958 to 1972 to play the facile game of systematic and destructive criticism. We would emphasize once more our attachment to the principle of well-defined Community research. Describing the mistakes made in the past is aimed only at providing lessons for the present and the future. In 1973, a new multiannual research programme was finally adopted by the Council¹. This programme is a turning point in the development of direct Community research, especially since it includes a large number of non-nuclear projects.

29. The conditions for a fresh start in Community research are therefore present, but it will only be made in practice if the necessary measures are taken to reorganize, restructure and straighten things out. What this amounts to is revitalizing the JRC and making it a credible instrument on the basis of the programme.

30. We have already pointed out that according to the Commission, efforts in this direction are at present being made at all levels. At this stage, our committee can only encourage these efforts, and it will of course evaluate their effects in due course in a subsequent report. But it must now be clear to all that this attempt at a fresh start is the last chance for Community research at the JRC.

¹ As regards the special position of Petten, for which no programme has yet been adopted, our committee considers it preferable to withhold its opinion until the new proposals are presented, which according to the Commission, should be done shortly.

