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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. 294/74) for a decision/adopting a first three-year plan of action in the field of information and documentation in science and technology

Rapporteur : Mr Kirsten H. PETERSEN

PE 38.725/fin.

By letter of 4 October 1974 the President of the Council of the European Communities requested the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 235 of the EEC Treaty, to deliver an opinion on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision adopting a first three-year plan of action in the field of information and documentation in science and technology.

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 Economic and Monetary Affairs and Committee on Budgets for their opinion.

On 29 October 1974 the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology appointed Mr K. Helveg Petersen rapporteur.

It considered this proposal at its meetings of 19 and 28 November 1974.

At the meeting of 28 November the committee unanimously adopted the motion for a resolution and explanatory statement.

Present: Mr Springorum, chairman; Mr Petersen, rapporteur; Mr Covelli, Mr Glesener, Mr Hougardy, Mr Krall, Mr Noè, Mr Normanton, Mr Pintat, Mr Radoux (deputizing for Mr Lautenschlager), Mr Thornley (deputizing for Mr Flämig), Mr Vandewiele and Mrs Walz.

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

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A

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

embodying the opinion of the European Parliament on the proposal from the Commission of the European Communities to the Council for a decision adopting a first three-year plan of action in the field of information and documentation in science and technology

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the proposal from the Commission to the Council ¹
 - having been consulted by the Council pursuant to Article 235 of the EEC Treaty (Doc. 294/74),
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (Doc. 387 /74),
 - having regard to its earlier resolutions on this subject, in particular the resolution of 15 June 1972, paragraphs 3 and 4, on the Euratom research programme in the form decided on by the Council on 21 December 1971 and the agreements between European states on certain joint research projects undertaken in collaboration with the Commission of the European Communities (COST Agreements),
1. Notes that, in accordance with its earlier requests, these plans in support of non-nuclear research are based on Article 235 of the EEC Treaty, thereby acquiring a legal foundation;
 2. Welcomes the fact that in this case the Community and third countries are to cooperate in a joint action to be managed by the Commission;
 3. Considers that the proposed measure, once implemented, will improve the infrastructure for Community research and the dissemination of information; although it will be necessary to extend it by laying down a standard language for computer control and therefore requests the Commission to make appropriate proposals.

¹OJ No C 126, 17 October 1974, p. 37

4. Calls in this connection for suitable measures for the protection of data, taking into account the fact that the results of the programme of action must be made available to all, including minor interested parties;
5. Regrets once again the short notice given by the Council for consideration of this proposal;
6. Regrets that the necessary appropriations have been entered in the budget only under Chapter 98;
7. Notes with disapproval
 - (a) that there is no written explanation of the extensive cuts to the original sums quoted and no comprehensive account of the reasons behind these cuts;
 - (b) that current estimates of costs for the second and third years of the programme have not been included;
8. Requests the Council and the Commission each acting within its own terms of reference to submit future proposals on this and other matters in accordance with a timetable which allows Parliament to give them proper unhurried consideration, as otherwise the whole purpose of consultation will be defeated;
9. Points out to the Council and the Commission that, if they fail to act on this request, they alone will bear responsibility for the consequences if Parliament is unable to meet the deadlines proposed by the Council and Commission;
10. Approves the proposal of the Commission of the European Communities and requests the latter to incorporate in its proposal the following amendment pursuant to Article 149, second paragraph, of the EEC Treaty;
11. Requests its competent committee to follow attentively the progress of the three-year plan of action and to report on the subject if appropriate;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution and the report of its committee to the Council and Commission of the European Communities.

Proposal for a Council decision adopting a first three-year plan
of action in the field of information and documentation in science
and technology

Preamble and Recitals unchanged

Article 1 unchanged

Article 2

The Commission shall be responsible for the execution of this plan of action, assisted by the Committee for Information and Documentation in Science and Technology (CIDST). This Committee and the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST) shall be kept regularly informed of the progress of the work. Furthermore, the Commission shall submit a full report to the Council each year.

Article 2

The Commission shall be responsible for the execution of this plan of action, assisted by the Committee for Information and Documentation in Science and Technology (CIDST). This Committee and the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST) shall be kept regularly informed of the progress of the work. Furthermore, the Commission shall submit a full report, as part of the general report, to the Council and the Parliament each year.

Article 3 unchanged

Article 4 unchanged

¹For full text see OJ No 126, 17 October 1974, p.37

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT1. General observations

1. The idea of building up information networks in which the Community has a part is not a new one. A similar attempt was made in a COST Agreement in 1972 when the Commission sought to base its participation on Article 1 and 2 of the Euratom Treaty. This was the subject of a report by Mr Glesener (Doc. 57/72), in which he concluded (paragraphs 47-51) that the Community had no authority in this matter and that Article 235 of the EEC Treaty would have to be applied. This was the view adopted by Parliament in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the resolution of 15 June 1972¹, although it was rejected as unnecessary by the Commission.

2. Now, however, the Commission is submitting a new proposal of this kind based on Article 235 of the EEC Treaty. In view of the position it adopted earlier, the committee can of course approve this proposal in principle.

One of the reasons for invoking Article 235 is that the Community's action programme in the field of science and technology policy adopted by the Council on 14 January 1974² also takes Article 235 of the EEC Treaty as its basis.

The present proposal is a follow-up to this programme. Its adoption is based on the same Article 235. It is therefore also logical in political terms to approve its adoption in principle by the Council.

2. The most important parts of the Document

3. Like so many previous Commission documents concerned with science and technology this one does not make easy reading. It would be useful if future documents were so drafted that the points of essential importance to political decision-making bodies were brought out with greater clarity.

4. The proposal for the Communication to the Council itself (pages 1 to 3) refers to a Council resolution of 24 June 1971 for the coordination of the activities of Member States in the field of information and documentation on

¹ OJ No. C 70, 1 July 1972, p. 50

² OJ No. C 7, 29 January 1974, p.2

science and technology¹. This is the basis of the aforementioned Council resolution of 14 January 1974 on the general action programme in the field of science and technology and also for the present sectoral plan of action on information and documentation that is now to be dealt with.

5. Special reference should be made to the Committee for Information and Documentation in Science and Technology (CIDST) which was set up by the Council in 1971. There also exists, however, a Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST). These committees have both been consulted. They hold different opinions as to the resources required. The Commission has based its request for resources on the opinion of CREST.

6. The proposal for a Council decision (pages 4 to 6) calls for comment on two points:

Article 2 should be extended. The final sentence should read:

'Furthermore, the Commission shall submit a full report, as part of the general report, to the Council and the Parliament each year.'

Parliament should not be by-passed in the further development of the matter. This report should either be incorporated in the general report, or be made a special section of it like the social report or the competition report.

7. The Committee on Budgets reached the following conclusion in its opinion.

Seen in relation to the whole budget, the sum required is fairly low (less than 0.05% of total expenditure) but is nevertheless of considerable importance to the Community. The Committee on Budgets would have

- (i) welcomed a written explanation of the major cuts made in the CIDST's original proposals and
- (ii) a more comprehensive account of the reasons behind them
- (iii) considered it useful to have current cost estimates for 1976 and 1977

but nevertheless recommends a favourable opinion.

The Commission explained to the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology that the funds required for 1975 were shown only in Chapter 98 of the estimates which the latter regrets and which the committee regrets this fact and the criticisms made by the Committee on Budgets.

¹ OJ C 122 of 10 December 1971

8. In this connection, it should be noted that the budgetary appropriations, according to the Commission, will rise from 1.89 million u.a. in 1975 to 2.3 million u.a. in 1976 and 2.5 million u.a. in 1977 - on the basis of 1970 prices - because the programme will develop gradually.

The appropriations as a whole belong to the administrative budget and not to the research budget, since they are for expenditure on a programme to promote research and not for a research project as such. Accordingly it does not come under the multi-year research programme.

9. Pages 7 to 9 of the Commission document contain a description of the three objectives of the plan of action which, according to Article 1 of the Council decision, form an integral part of the decision. They are the sectoral information systems, the implementation of the information network and information technology and methodology. The second last paragraph of this 'appendix to Annex I' makes it clear that these will be mostly indirect projects. According to statements by the Commission to the committee, specialized outside institutes, mainly in the Member States, will be the contractual partners in each case.

3. The individual proposals

10. A total of 23 proposals have been submitted.

The proposals are arranged according to the individual plan objectives mentioned on pages 7 and 8, the first digit of each proposal number corresponding to the number of the objective.

11. There are, in the first place, twelve projects in the field of sectoral information systems. Some of these systems are already in operation, others are being built up and others again are in the planning stage. Ultimately they will all be part of a large European information network in the field of science and technology. They concern documentation in the field of nuclear research, metallurgy, agriculture, environmental protection, veterinary and human medicine, education, data banks and the study of future systems and provision of documentation processing systems.

Only 4-6 of the projects are direct, i.e. operated by the Commission itself:

- the European nuclear documentation system (page 12),
- the metallurgy documentation system (page 14),
- possibly, the environmental information system (page 19),
- possibly, the data bank (page 25),
- studies of future systems (page 26) and
- provision of documentation processing facilities (page 27).

12. The plan objective 'Implementation of the Information Network' includes five projects to be found on pages 29 to 37. The introduction on page 28 states that these are stages which will be implemented consecutively. A uniform computer language is essential for this, and the opportunity should be taken to define it. The Commission should make appropriate proposals.

13. Finally, pages 39 to 46 give the five projects under the plan objective 'Information Technology and Methodology'. They most probably depend on the creation of the information network but are themselves a fundamental pre-requisite of information work. There is a great need for information work to be exploited. It must therefore be organized and developed. Among the projects concerned are the study and development of appropriate multilingual tools (page 39) and standards for the information network, information analysis centres (page 41), the training of information specialists (page 42), the development of information technology (page 43) and development studies (page 44).

There are no objections to any of these projects. The committee hopes that the non-Member States referred to in the document will also participate since a broad basis will provide a better guarantee for the success of this commendable block of measures. The committee considers, however, that comprehensive measures to protect the available data are necessary in each case. The Commission should also propose control measures, however, to protect the interests of smaller consumers. Parliament will follow closely what is done in this respect.

4. Assessment of the proposals

14. Bearing in mind that the planned information network will serve to disseminate information and promote further research and, at least indirectly, promises to be of economic value, the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology welcomes the proposed measures.

15. Although the committee is aware that nobody can guarantee the success of the plan, a step towards the future is worth risking here. The committee does, however, emphasize that not only the Council but also the Parliament should receive regular information.

16. The committee considers it important that management responsibility for the implementation of this action plan, in which third countries will also participate, should clearly be placed in the hands of the Commission. What the committee finds essential is that a Community project, which also includes third countries, is being launched under Article 235 of the EEC Treaty. This will create a political precedent which can only be favourable to the future development of the Community.

17. In conclusion the committee would emphasize how important it is that, in the implementation of the information and documentation service, every effort should be made to give users the greatest possible service, so that all the knowledge and experience acquired within the Community may be made accessible to all interested parties.

Opinion of the Committee on Budgets: Draftsman of the opinion: Mr BOANO

The Committee on Budgets appointed Mr BOANO draftsman of the opinion on 29 October 1974.

It considered the draft opinion at its meeting of 25 November 1974 and adopted it unanimously.

The following were present: Mr Pêtre, acting Chairman; Mr Boano, rapporteur; Mr Artzinger, Mr Cointat, Mr Fabbrini, Mr Gerlach, Mr Lagorce, Mr Lautenschlager, Lord Lothian, Mr Schmidt, Mr Shaw, Mr Terrenoire, Mr Vernaschi.

1. The question dealt with in the Commission's proposal of 18 September 1974 (COM (74) 1423 final) is of a highly technical and complicated nature. Its basic objective could be summarized as an effort to have Europe catch up with the United States and Japan in the sphere of documentation and information on science and technology.

Need for the adoption of a multi-annual Community approach

2. Your draftsman is convinced of the urgent need for a Community approach, phased over a number of years, to the evolution of a European network for the collection, exchange, analysis and utilization of information and documentation in science and technology. There can, indeed, be little room for dispute as to the need for a comprehensive approach to the problem. In the European context, unlike the situation obtaining in North America and Japan, special problems of a linguistic nature have to be surmounted. Difficulties arising from different methods of approach, a disparity of equipment and considerable segmentation also pose themselves. However, the need for Member States to follow closely scientific and technological trends is evident and has, indeed, been long recognized by the Community as is evidenced by the research programme of the ECSC and by the extensive coverage given to research and investment activities in the Budget of the Communities.

Background to the proposal

3. On 24 June 1971, the Council adopted a resolution for the coordination of the activities of Member States in the field of information and documentation in science and technology (IDST). The resolution aimed at encouraging progress in these spheres and at setting up an appropriate European network. To assist in the preparatory work in relation to these objectives, the Council set up the Committee for Information and Documentation in Science and Technology (CIDST). The plans of action prepared by CIDST are considered by the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST) which transmits them, with its observations, to the Commission.

4. During the course of the past year and a half, it became apparent to the CIDST and the Commission that the rapid and uncoordinated pace of the technical and commercial developments in the field of information and documentation was making for a situation that would render virtually impossible the establishment of a rational European network if practical

action were not taken without delay.

Summary of the Commission's proposal

5. The Commission has proposed an initial three year action programme for the establishment of the European network of information and documentation on science and technology. The proposal is based on the CIDST study and the opinion of CREST. The plan has three main aspects (1975 estimated costs shown in brackets) :

- (i) the speedy development of information systems and their integration into a European network involves the creation of new Community systems and the supporting of rationalization and development of existing systems (550,000 u.a.) ;
- (ii) pilot studies as to implementation of the information network, drawing up of specifications for equipment, and the gradual adaptation of the specialized information systems of the Member States to the European network (660,000 u.a.) ; and
- (iii) support activity aimed at setting up appropriate multilingual systems and standard formats for information exchanges (630,000 u.a.) ;

Estimated cost

6. The total cost for 1975 is, therefore, estimated at 1,840,000 u.a. Progressive development of the plan over the years 1976 and 1977 would cost 2.3 m.u.a. and 2.5 m.u.a. on the basis of 1974 prices or a total three-year budget of 6.64 m.u.a. for carrying out the plan of action. In addition, it appears from the Annex to Annex 3 that the 1975 estimate excludes the sum of 420,000 u.a. needed in 1975 to continue the operation of existing systems ; this sum of 420,000 u.a. is a repeat of the 1974 budget provision.

Cuts made by CREST on the initial estimates

7. In going through the documentation, your draftsman was struck by the fact that the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST) made very substantial cuts on the amounts proposed by the Committee for Information and Documentation in Science and Technology. (CIDST). The

following table shows the extent of these reductions (Annex to the Annex 4 of Document 294/74).

1975 budgetary plan

	Original Proposal u.a.,000	Recommended by CREST u.a.,000
(1) Scientific and technical information and documentation systems	905	550
(2) The information network	1040	660
(3) Studies on methodology and information technology	805	630
Total :	2750	1840

The CREST opinion does not provide explanations for these substantial cuts which resulted from the pruning of 11 of the 13 constituent elements quantified in the tables prepared by the CIDST. Some of the cuts made would appear to require justification. For instance, the STIDC proposed an outlay of 300,000 u.a. for "provision of processing facilities for documentation purposes in order to enable the Community Institutions to play their role in the European information network". CREST substituted an estimate of 200,000 u.a. Cuts of this nature appear to be arbitrary and, as they are not justified in the documentation available, the possibility that their severity could have the effect of depriving the plan of its effectiveness cannot be ruled out. The problem is so large that it cannot be tackled in an effective manner without a sizeable outlay of funds. Your draftsman considers that, while due attention must be paid to economy, care must be taken also to ensure that inadequately financed schemes are not launched.

8. Informed decisions on budgetary questions cannot be reached by considering financial aspects in isolation. Your draftsman would have been glad to have had in the documentation some data on the effort made by Member States in the field of information and documentation in science and technology. Estimates of the outlay by the Nine at national level - both public and private - together with the number of personnel involved would have set the matter more in perspective.

Conclusion

9. Under chapter 98 (non allocated provisional appropriations) of the 1975 draft budget the sum of 1,840,000 u.a. is entered, which added to the amount of 484,000 u.a. at chapter 36, article 362, gives a total for documentary research, scientific and technical information and documentation of 2,324,000 u.a. for 1975. As well, 709,000 u.a. are available for other Community scientific and technical information outlay making a grand total for 1975 of 3,033,000 u.a.

While recommending that a favourable opinion be delivered on this proposal because of the importance and urgency of its subject, your draftsman feels bound to point out a number of shortcomings.

A. On the information provided:

10. An overall view, however summary, of the methods and nature of commitments already undertaken by the various Member States, with an indication of the systems already in operation, the staff employed and the expenditure incurred, would have been appropriate;

11. An indication of the budget headings under which the proposed action would fall would have been useful and welcome;

12. Equally useful would have been an estimate of foreseeable costs for 1976 and 1977, taking into account likely rates of increase.

B. On the content of the proposal:

13. An explanatory memorandum on the reasons for CREST introducing substantial reductions in the estimates initially submitted to CIDST, which has more specific responsibility both scientifically and from the point of view of the estimates, should have been included.

14. In particular the sum of 75,000 u.a. mentioned in the budget for the training of operators seems inadequate;

15. It also seems necessary that in addition to the appropriations for scientific and technical information, sufficient allocations should be provided for technical management personnel, without, however, going beyond what is strictly essential for implementing the new proposals under productive management of the financial resources allocated.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND MONETARY AFFAIRS

Letter from the vice-chairman of the Committee to Mr Springorum,
chairman of the Committee on Energy, Research and Technology

Luxembourg, 29 November 1974

Dear Mr Springorum,

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, consulted for an opinion for your Committee on Document 294/74, examined this proposal for a decision adopting a first 3-year plan of action in the field of information and documentation in science and technology.

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs regards this 3-year plan of action as a useful contribution for the establishment of a European network of documentation and information as one of the first steps towards a European industrial policy. We consider that no further comment is called for from our Committee at this moment. I am pleased to inform you that the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs is in general agreement with this initiative of the Commission.

Yours sincerely

Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams
Vice-Chairman
Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs



