

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(80) 673 final

Brussels, 6th November 1980

RE-EXAMINATION OF THE R & D PROGRAMME

"REFERENCE MATERIALS AND METHODS AND APPLIED METROLOGY"

(Communication from the Commission to the Council)

COM(80) 673 final

COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL

RE-EXAMINATION OF THE PROGRAMME REFERENCE MATERIALS AND METHODS, AND APPLIED METROLOGY

Introduction

The programme reference materials and methods (BCR) and Applied Metrology which was proposed to be an extension of the previous programme as of 1st January 1979 was approved by the Council on 9th October 1979 (O.J. n. 258, 13/10/79). The funds corresponding to the year 1979 of the programme were released on 7th December of that year.

In its article 4, the decision of the Council states, that the programme was subject, within six months after approval of the new programme of the JRC, to a re-examination which could result in a revision, in order to take due account of the content of the new programme of the JRC.

Description of the previous situation

The BCR programme was first established in 1973. It was and it remained coupled to a similar programme carried out in the JRC and called non-nuclear METRE programme. This part of the METRE programme had a staff of 70.

The BCR programme consists in establishing reference materials (standards) of chemical substances or of materials with defined physical properties. The implementation of each project requires the collaboration of several laboratories. In many cases, the JRC was also a participating laboratory but in addition, it had the role of pilot laboratory. The laboratories of the JRC were carrying out preliminary studies useful for the initiation of new projects, insured the preparation of samples, their distribution, were in charge of scientific and technical guidance, the preparation of minutes of meetings, the statistical treatment of data, the establishment of reports giving the synthesis of the results (certification reports).

New situation

The council, upon proposal of the Commission, decided to terminate the non-nuclear part of the METRE programme to concentrate the JRC effort on large projects more specific to the Community role of the JRC.

The new programme provides nevertheless a scientific support to the indirect action BCR. This is to cover scientific guidance, research in laboratories for developing methods or carrying out some analyses, evaluation of results and, in the earlier stages, assistance in the statistical treatment of data.

The consequences for the indirect action "Reference materials and Methods" are the following:

1. The preparation of samples will be now given to laboratories in the member countries except in very special cases. The Joint Research Centre has developed special expertise in the preparation of some types of samples. It will make it available when necessary during the whole programme. The support will be limited to the role of advisor and most of the actual work will be given to outside laboratories or firms except in special cases where some preliminary developments based on existing knowhow are needed. The cost of outside work will of course be borne by the indirect action programme.
2. The preparation of the minutes of meetings will be made by the personnel of the indirect action or by experts attending the meetings.
3. The scientific guidance of the projects will be taken over by personnel of the indirect action with the help of external experts (and in some cases with the experts of the JRC available through the "Support to BCR"). The establishment of synthesis reports will be progressively given to experts taking part in the projects or to independent experts.
4. Statistical treatment of results.
The statistical treatment of the data is a very important task as the ultimate result should be certified. It is also important that the methodology should be uniform for all projects. It is necessary for the indirect action to have at its disposal a single and experienced person for that purpose. JCR will provide in the earlier stages the same support as before and is prepared to ensure the smooth transfer of this responsibility to an expert of DG XII.
5. Storage and distribution of samples.
The contacts which were taken demonstrate that this task could be done by national laboratories. CREST had in fact insisted that existing infrastructures should be used.

Conclusion

The termination of the non-nuclear METRE programme has no effect on the "Applied Metrology" part of the indirect action. As far as the part "reference materials and methods" is concerned, the termination of the non-nuclear METRE programme has of course consequences on the implementation of the BCR programme, in so far as its management is concerned. Certain tasks assumed up to now by the GCR and its staff will in the future have to be performed by the BCR personnel or by outside laboratories and experts. This may, in certain cases, increase the cost of an individual project and consequently affect the total number of projects which can be implemented under the present programme.

But this consequence will in no case be such that any one of the fields listed in the annex to the Council decision of 9th October 1979 would have to be dropped.

Consequently there is, in the Commission's opinion, no need to amend the said Council decision.

A N N E X

OPINION OF THE ACPM "BCR AND APPLIED METROLOGY"
CONCERNING THE RE-EXAMINATION FORESEEN UNDER ARTICLE 4
OF THE PROGRAMME DECISION OF 9th OCTOBER 1979

The ACPM shares the conclusion drawn by the Commission in its communication to the Council on the examination of the consequences of the termination of the non-nuclear METRE programme which has been implemented by the Joint Research Centre up to 1980.

In particular, the "Applied Metrology" part of the programme cannot be affected, since this activity had never been covered by a direct action programme of the Community.

On the other hand, the Committee has noted a considerable number of consequences for the BCR part of the programme. These are due to the fact, that the staff of JRC METRE programme in the past had been closely co-operating with the BCR for the benefit of both the direct and indirect action in this field, and permanently performed a certain number of functions with respect to certain projects such as providing research activities undertaken in the JRC laboratories at ISPRA, GEEL and PETTEN (for example preparation of samples), scientific expertise on the occasion of the establishment of synthesis and certification reports, taking care of storage and distribution of samples and making available secretaries for working groups.

These functions must now be taken over by:

1. the staff of the indirect action programme (which has been slightly increased to this effect).
2. outside experts (which will increase costs of individual projects)
3. the specific but very limited support still foreseen by the JRC under its new programme of 13th March 1980 (7 men/year).

These consequences will lay an additional burden on the staff and financial resources available under the programme. The Committee has therefore once again expressed regrets about the termination of the non-nuclear METRE programme and stressed the necessity that the results already obtained be exploited in future activities of BCR and JRC programmes. On the other hand, the Committee found that these consequences did not necessitate a change in global scope of the programme.

All projects as indicated in the programme decision of the Council should in principle be pursued. If, in the light of the facts stated above, it should appear necessary, in the course of the implementation of the programme, to establish priorities or to restrict activities in certain fields the Committee would, as usual, advise the Commission accordingly.