

European research area: new perspectives

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The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Mr Umberto **GUIDONI** (GUE/NGL, IT) in response to the European Commission's Green Paper: on the European Research Area: New Perspectives.

The report regrets that figures for expenditure on research and development show that the EU average is only 1.84% of GDP against 2.68% in the USA and 3.18 % in Japan; and that expenditure varies from 0.39% in Romania and 0.4% in Cyprus to 3.86% in Sweden; underlines the importance of increasing the average spending as well as raising expenditure in some Member States; highlights the importance of better focussing the diverse research and development efforts throughout the Union, especially in order to facilitate the transition towards the digital economy.

Creating a single labour market for researchers:

Members stress the importance of preventing the further outflow of competent European researchers; calls for the adoption of appropriate measures to retain researchers in the EU and to bring them back to the EU. They consider that access to the EU for researchers should not be impeded by existing national barriers, such as insufficient recognition and portability of acquired social entitlements, tax disadvantages and difficulties in relocating families.

The report recalls that one way of making researchers more mobile might be the creation of a research voucher which could be used by researchers in other Member States and hosting institutions and universities. The Commission and the Member States are called upon to enrich post-graduate and doctoral curricula by encouraging joint research supervision in different countries; and to consider the launching of European postdoctoral fellowships and training schemes building on the highly successful Erasmus programme.

Members stress the need to establish and introduce a single European career path in the field of research and to introduce an integrated information system on job vacancies and training contracts in the research sector in Europe. Lastly, they emphasise the importance of making the recruitment and promotion procedures for research workers fully open and transparent.

Developing world-class research infrastructures: the Commission is invited to propose a legal framework to facilitate the creation and operation of major Community research organisations and infrastructures and to consider the involvement of existing European institutions and agreements, such as the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), the European Space Agency (ESA) and the European Fusion Development Agreement (EFDA). The Members also call upon the Commission to support RPOs, universities and research funding agencies both to build their strength and to link their resources in building the ERA the goal being to reach global leadership in major scientific areas.

Strengthening research institutions: the committee acknowledges the importance of the ERA's regional dimension and considers that the development of regional clusters is an important means of achieving critical mass, bringing together universities, research institutions and industry, and creating European centres of excellence. They call on the Commission to establish a European forum with high-level national representation, including national research councils, entrusted with the mission of identifying, developing and supporting major pan-European research initiatives, as well as a common system of scientific and technical review to better exploit the results of European programmes.

Sharing knowledge: the report agrees with the ‘open innovation’ concept promoted by the Commission according to which the public and private sectors become full partners and share knowledge provided that a balanced and fair system is developed between open access to scientific results and use of such results by the private sector (fair sharing of knowledge). Members believe that the rule of a fair and equitable financial reward for use of public knowledge by industry should be officially recognised.

In regard to the new opportunities opened up by the internet, the report underlines the importance of respecting authors' freedom of choice and intellectual property rights (IPR), ensuring the continuation of quality peer reviews and the trusted secure preservation of refereed work, and encourages stakeholders to work together through pilot projects to evaluate the impact and viability of alternative models, such as the development of Open Access. The Members also highlight the vital importance of establishing a Community Patent and a high-quality, cost-effective, innovation-friendly judicial system for European patents.

International cooperation: inconsidering that R&D cooperation can help to achieve specific Millennium Development Goals, Members believe that it is important to align EU scientific co-operation policies with EU foreign policy and development aid programmes. The Commission is invited to implement and support measures to improve the level of participation of scientists from developing countries in international collaborative science and R&D projects and promote access to existing intellectual property globally. Underlining the importance of attracting researchers from third countries to the EU, Members support the Commission's proposal for the creation of a blue card system which would be of great value for human resources in science and technology.