Research and technological development RTD: achieving coordination through cooperation

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The Commission communication deals with the practical implementation of Article 130h of the Treaty on European Union, which provides that the Community and the Member States shall coordinate their research and technological development (RTD) activities so as to ensure that national policies and Community policy are mutually consistent. The discussion focused on the following issues: - the priority objectives of coordination, - how to implement it when determining RTD policies and carrying out research activities. There was also discussion of the desirability of opening up national RTD programmes to research bodies in other Member States, and of the possibilities afforded by the instruments provided for in Articles 130k and 130l of the Treaty (supplementary programmes and Community participation in programmes undertaken by several Member States). In the light of the discussions, the President summarised the conclusions as follows: ‘The Council recognised that greater coordination between national and Community RTD policies could be achieved in pursuit of the objectives laid down by the Treaty, in particular the desirability of Community added value, taking account of the desirability of promoting stimulating competition between the Member States: - with regard to determining RTD policies, such coordination could be based on better use of the existing structures, namely the specific programme committees (whose duties could be extended to include exchanging information on national RTD policies) and the reformed CREST, one of whose main tasks would be to contribute to the coordination of the RTD activities of the Community and the Member States; - with regard to the carrying out of research activities, the role of the programme committees continued to be important in improving cross--programme coordination. As far as the possibilities afforded by the instruments provided for in Articles 130k and 130l of the Treaty and by opening up national research programmes to research bodies in other Member States were concerned, these were complex issues that required more detailed examination; - with regard to international cooperation, more systematic alignment of Member States’ positions concerning RTD in international organisations should be sought. The Council asked the Permanent Representatives Committee to continue examining all aspects of the Commission communication in the light of the discussion by the Council in order to enable it to reach more specific conclusions on the subject at its next meeting’.