Resaerch RTD, 5th framework-programme EC 1998-2002: research, technological development and demonstration activities

1997/0119(COD) - 16/12/1997

The rapporteur stressed the importance of the added value provided by European research programmes. She explained that this went beyond the promotion of improved exchanges between researchers of different nationalities as it responded to the need to give SMEs every opportunity and to encourage the Joint Research Centre to assert itself as an independent body. As regards the funding envisaged, the rapporteur considered that the Commission, with its ECU 16.7 billion, had not shown much vision as this was equivalent to just under 4% of total research expenditure by the EU governments. Commissioner Cresson noted with satisfaction that Parliament had supported and reinforced the innovative aspects of the Commission's proposal. In particular, with regard to the financial aspects, the Commissioner commented that Parliament's draft opinion proposed a fifth framework programme with a budget of ECU 400 million more than proposed by the Commission. She was in this respect convinced that, faced with competitors such as the North Americans and Japanese who were not letting up on their research efforts, the European Union could not allow itself to cut back or allow a levelling off of the resources allocated to research at European level. Furthermore, Mrs Cresson agreed with the spirit of Parliament's amendments which she judged to be very useful in several cases (for example, the amendment which translated into operational terms the interdependency between the decision to adopt the fifth framework programme and its financial allocation and the negotiation on the future financial perspectives of the European Union, or those amendments aiming to ensure a better balance between men and women in the 'Improvement of human potential' programme and the introduction of the question of equality of opportunity as a theme for socioeconomic research). Finally, the Commissioner stated that she intended to increase her cooperation with Parliament during the implementation of the research programme because Parliament was best placed to ensure that European research was used to serve European citizens.