

European research area: activities within the scope of the EC framework programme 2002-2006

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This Communication seeks to identify ways in which to enhance coordination between European level joint research projects and national, publicly funded, research programmes - through the use of Article 169. The Commission hopes to launch a debate within the EU institutions on how to optimise closer EU /national research collaboration. Under specific scrutiny is the yet to be used Article 169. This Article, though limited in scope, nevertheless offers interesting possibilities to enhance European and national research. It specifically allows for the possibility of Community participation in research programmes undertaken by Member States. Where appropriate, application of the Article would make it possible to achieve results unattainable otherwise. It also has the added advantage of being able to draw on a number of diverse resources. The Communication notes that the recently proposed revision of the EU research framework programme (2002-2006), expressly aims to install new elements into the European Research Area, by: - developing more of a structure to European research activities; - developing networks of excellence; - integrating projects; and - allowing for Community participation in national programmes. To this end, the Communication discusses ways in which the networking of national programmes could be optimised. One means would be to provide both open and flexible support for proposals which make an effective contribution to the coordination of research activities. In terms of Community participation under Article 169, the Communication envisages the following options: - joint implementation of research programmes complemented by a joint work programme; - giving structure to the implementation of the programmes; - offering wide coverage of research to generate large-scale activities in each Member State; - participation of at least two Member States, plus one associate state; - Specification of intellectual property rules to apply to the implementation of the programmes. Concerning financial aspects, the Communication notes that financial participation would take the form of a contribution of part of the budget for jointly implemented programmes. The conditions under which this would be granted remain to be decided. Lastly, concerning the "Themes" which could be covered by the application of Article 169, the Communication proposes the following: - clinical trials on vaccines and medicinal products; - global changes and the individual components thereof; - nanotechnologies or certain aspects of genome research; - industrial technology such as aeronautics; - areas linked to Community policies, such as rail transport or the use of water resources.