Science and technology: production and development of Community statistics

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This document consists of the final report to the European Parliament and to the Council according to Article 8 of the Council Decision (94/78/CE, Euratom) establishing a multiannual programme for the development of Community statistics on research, development and innovation. This report calls for two main conclusions. The comparison of the situation with what was the state of the European statistical information system on R&D and Innovation five years ago shows impressive improvements (user needs systematically reviewed, methodological framework has been improved or extended, more comparable data is available at the European level,pilot surveys have been launched in numerous domains). This progress was only possible because of co-ordinated actions of the Member States and international organisations propelled by the Council decision. However, in spite of all these efforts and achievements, the current state of availability of statistics at the European level is not yet sufficient to meet the demand and to back decision making, for instance, domains are unexplored from a statistical viewpoint, available data are incomplete, timeliness is still poor: regional data are typically available 1.5-2.5 years after the end of the reference year, etc). The Commission considers that the efforts stimulated by the Council decision should be continued. The main axis of the developments to be carried out are the following: · broader use of administrative sources (which has proved promising in the study of patent applications); · better co-ordination between R&D and innovation aspects in existing data collection (as started in the structural business statistics regulation); · measurement and improvement of the quality of the available data. To achieve these objectives, a legal frame seems to be necessary: it will foster national efforts and guarantee the provision of the needed resources. This legal framework should ideally take the form of a regulation which will consolidate the existing data production at the European level in the areas of funding, performance and output measurement of R&D. If a regulation does not prove possible or desirable, a new Council decision on the improvement and completion of R&D and Innovation statistics should be taken. This decision would push forward the developments mentioned above.