Research and technological development RTD: achieving coordination through cooperation

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Following on directly from earlier positions expressed by the European Parliament on this matter during the previous parliamentary term (QUISTHOUDT-ROWOHL report - May 94), the Committee on Research and Energy unanimously adopted the report by Mr Christof TANNERT (PSE, D) containing the European Parliament's position on the communication submitted by the Commission in October. The report reiterated that the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST) was set up in 1974 primarily for coordination purposes but felt that little progress had been made since then in coordinating national RDT policies. The report felt that institutionalized coordination agencies needed to be redefined if national RDT policies were to be efficiently coordinated with each other and with Community RDT policy and therefore called for the Scientific and Technical Research Committee (CREST) to be used henceforth mainly to help the Commission and the Council define the Union's science and technology policy and analyze and compare national and Community RDT policies so that they can be better coordinated. In future, CREST should designate the key RDT sectors in the Union, start coordinating them at the decision preparation stage and ensure that there is frequent institutionalized communication with the specific programme committees for the fourth framework programme. It should also carry out preparatory work so that the Committee on Research can examine the state of cooperation at regular intervals and ensure that information on research is being exchanged between Member States. CREST and the Commission should also ensure that RDT activities are coordinated with other Union policies (environment, transport, etc.) and that there is a harmonized evaluation of the results obtained. CREST was called upon to submit reports simultaneously to the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. This enhanced interaction between CREST and the specific programme committees in the field of communication, information and integration should go hand in glove with more personal contacts between scientists and increased mobility, in order to create a European scientific area. Similarly, priority should be given to the third and fourth fields of action of the framework programme when redistributing appropriations for the fourth framework programme. In addition, the Committee on Research was in favour of applying all the articles of the EC Treaty (130 K and 130 L) and of implementing programmes which were supplementary to the fourth framework programme. The Commission was therefore called upon to create pilot actions on subjects which went beyond the fourth framework programme. Additional resources should be provided in order to guarantee the mobility of researchers from Member States not taking part in supplementary programmes. The Committee on Research called on the Member States to review the unanimity rule governing the adoption of the RDT framework programme and to grant the European Parliament a right of initiative with respect to framework programmes. It also called on the Commission to draw up a list of existing facilities and to propose new approaches to funding programmes, making use of tax incentives, the possibility of funding venture capital etc. With the prospect of EURATOM provisions being integrated into the Treaty on European Union, it called for EURATOM RDT programmes to be placed on an equal footing with other specific programmes and called on the Commission to determine the key sectors in the field of pre-competitive research which could be coordinated through supplementary programmes. Finally, it called for a specific line in the budget for these supplementary programmes.