Research in the candidate countries, measures to ensure their full involvement in the framework programme

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Jürgen ZIMMERLING (EPP-ED, D) on the state of research in applicant countries. The report said that the Commission must ensure that researchers in the applicant countries received fair treatment compared to their counterparts in the current Member States when it implemented the 6th Research Framework Programme. The committee also urged the Commission and Member States to encourage links between research and industry via co-financing, flexible career planning, private research entities and the funding of research through industrial associations in the candidate countries. The Commission should help to create a favourable financial environment so that the ability of SMEs to participate in the Programme was not diminished either by the need to obtain bank guarantees or by the burden of assuming a significant share of co-financing. The committee also called on the applicant countries to develop a research strategy of their own, either directly by way of assistance payments or indirectly by way of incentives, that would meet their requirements in the area of research. The report pointed out that twelve of the candidate countries were involved in the 5th Framework Programme and they, together with Turkey, would be taking part in the 6th Framework Programme. Moreover, some of the candidate countries were expected to become full members of the Union during the period covered by FP6. Good planning was therefore needed as economic uncertainty and restrictive budgetary policies in the applicant countries had placed national research systems under enormous strain. The committee noted that low public research funding and inadequate mechanisms for attracting private-sector funding had led to an impoverishment of the human research potential in these countries, with ageing research infrastructures and low researchers' salaries aggravating the problem. This had led to a substantial external and internal brain drain.