Science and technology: cooperation between the Union and the Central and Eastern Europe and CIS countries

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This Commission communication relates to cooperation in the field of science and technology between the European Union and the central and eastern European countries (CEEC) and the new independent states of the former Soviet Union (NIS). It describes the cooperation projects implemented with these countries under various Community cooperation programmes: - PHARE/TACIS, - COPERNICUS/CEEC 1992-93 (participation of CEECs in joint research projects and mobility grants in 1992-93), - participation of the CEECs in 5 specific programmes under the third RDT framework programme in 1992-93 and of the NIS since 1994; - COPERNICUS 1994 (participation of the CEECs and NIS in joint research projects complementing the 5 specific programmes under the third RDT framework programme); - creation of the INTAS for the NIS; - extension of cooperation to all programmes under the fourth RDT framework programme to all CEECs (94-98) from 1994. - CEECs: the Community financed over 3,500 projects in 1992/93 in synergy with Member States' projects and the PHARE programme. Over ECU 110 million were earmarked over 2 years in order to promote science and technology in the CEECs. In the majority of cases, the projects selected were of a very high scientific standard in order to strengthen research both in these countries and in Europe. However, implementing difficulties arose during the first year (with overly long delays between the close of invitations to tender and the funding of projects), which is why subsequent invitations for proposals were more targeted and deadlines for replying and committing funds were shorter (on average 6 months between the response and funding). - NIS: INTAS (International Association for the Promotion of Cooperation with Scientists from the Independent States of the former Soviet Union) was set up at the Commission's initiative in order to select projects funded within the framework of cooperation (ECU 25 million in 1993). All the independent states have been included in the COPERNICUS programme since 1994 and are included in the list of countries participating in the 5 specific RDT programmes. Finally, in the nuclear sector, the Commission intervened to the sum of ECU 14 million in order to investigate the effects of radioactive pollution. All the specific programmes under the fourth RDT framework programme have been open to the CEECs since 1994. However, given that funding for this programme has been reduced, activities funded under PHARE and TACIS and Member States' cooperation projects need to be coordinated. It is clear from the extent of this cooperation (including the level of funding) that the Community is supporting the development of research collaboration between the Member States of the Community, the CEECs and the NIS. Extending the fourth framework programme to the CEECs will foster this move, to the benefit of all the parties.