EC/United States agreement for scientific and technical cooperation: renewal

2003/0223(CNS) - 01/10/2003 - Document attached to the procedure

This report comprises an impact assessment of the Science and Technology Agreement concluded between the EC and the United States of America. The Agreement was signed on 5 December 1997 and approved by the Council on 13 October 1998. The text of the EU-USA S&T Agreement requires that its performance and impact be reviewed prior to its renewal later this year. A Panel of three external experts has therefore undertaken this task and its findings are set out in this report. In essence the Panel's task as defined in its terms of reference was to assess what the Agreement was adding to S&T cooperation between the EU and the USA in relation to what was intended at the outset. Its principal **findings** may be summarised as follows:

-The number of projects in FP5 with USA collaborators is disappointingly low at around 140.

- Particular attention was paid to the awarenessof the Agreement both in the EU and the USA. The outcome was generally disappointing especially in Europe. At departmental and agency level in the USA, particularly where implementing arrangements had been put in place, it was of a higher order albeit limited in the main to such audiences. Particular initiatives need to be put in place to improve this situation both ex anteto portray the opportunity that is available and *ex post* to communicate the outputs achieved to appropriate audiences. Certain suggestions are made in the report.

- Undoubtedly awareness of the Agreement would be increased if its attractivenessto the scientific community and other stakeholders could be enhanced and be seen as more tangible. One way of doing this would be to attribute some form of funding to the operation of the Agreement perhaps as a 'Seedcorn fund' that would catalyse involvement. Another approach would be for the Parties to the Agreement to work together to identify research agendas that represent a shared scientific position for the EU and the USA in coming years. Some progress is being made here and specific suggestions are also set out in the report. Such approaches would increase the European added value of the Agreement which at present is not maximised in part because awareness of the opportunities available is of such a low order.

- The JCG meetingsare seen as instrumental for discussing and deciding areas for cooperation, the need for specific implementing arrangements and other initiatives designed to make the Agreement operational. However the meetings do not achieve a high profile and there is scant awareness of them outside those involved. The Panel was disappointed with the performance of the JCG.

- The differentiationbetween the EU–USA S&T Agreement and other analogous agreements with individual Member States needs to be clarified as there is some confusion about this in the USA.

- The Panel were able to identify positive benefitsfrom the Agreement though it would have liked to have seen more identifiable gains that could be directly linked to its existence. The benefits were mainly science-led and derive in many instances from the negotiation of specific implementing arrangements. They involve factors such as increased critical mass, experience of different ways of doing things, and accessibility of different datasets.

- The Agreement has the potential to achieve downstream impactson relationships, for example in industry and in terms of government policy in addition to those directly at a scientific level. From an industrial standpoint it takes time to convert S&T outcomes to marketable products or services and in the main such outcomes were not yet clear or capable of assessment.

- A further question for the performance and operation of the Agreement concerns the reciprocityof the respective involvements and whether these are in balance. Although this does not appear to be a significant issue there are some ambiguities in relation to certain USA departments and agencies that would benefit from clarification.

- In the first five years under review the potential impactof the Agreement has not been fully exploited and in the future more dynamic approaches are required.

Key **recommendations** are as follows:

-Every effort should be made to accelerate the cooperative process.

-The range of activities covered under the Agreement needs to be capitalised on.

-Target areas for communication should be identified in relevant sectors and initiatives put in place.

-The Commission should ensure that Member States are better briefed and are encouraged to 'buy-in' to the Agreement as stakeholders.

-Further elucidation is needed on particular aspects of the reciprocity achievable in the USA in specific circumstances.

-The JCG needs to be better exploited as a communication vehicle so that scientific and other communities are aware of its deliberations.

-Attributed funding should be established from both Parties as a 'Seedcorn fund' for use in specific initiatives.

-The Agreement should be renewed but as part of this process of renewal a strategy should be established that builds effectively on the foundations laid in the first five years in order to better exploit the potential of the Agreement.

-The EU Delegation in Washington DC, in conjunction with the Embassies of Member States, should make particular effort to communicate to USA government agencies the essential differentiation between the EU-USA S&T Agreement and those of Member States.

-The goals of the Agreement should be made more overt from a management standpoint and criteria for assessing delivery of these goals agreed.

-The Commission should ensure that it has put in place the appropriate level of direct communication with key USA government departments - and in doing so that the Agreement has a champion at a senior level on both sides.

-The relevance of high profile functions should be assessed continuously for opportunities that might be available to enhance relationships and involvements under the Agreement so that it is publicised and communicated to appropriate audiences.