Specific research programme RTD: environment and climate (1994-1998)

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"Horizontal" amendments to the specific programmes. As with its consideration of the 12 specific programmes approved by the EP at the end of the previous parliamentary term, the EP adopted horizontal amendments which dealt with the same issues but which were located in different places in the texts of the individual projects. These amendments related to: 1) the EP's prerogatives with regard to the budget: the Committee on Research felt that the final amounts for the programmes should be adopted by the budgetary authority in accordance with the resources available under the financial perspective and the relative priority laid down for the fields covered by the various programmes. 2) the progress made in implementing the programmes: as far as the committee was concerned, any increase in the overall maximum amount of the Fourth Framework Programme for RTD would depend, in particular, on the evaluation of the progress made in implementing the programmes; in this respect, it stressed that for the progress to be deemed satisfactory, it was important for the first commitments of appropriations to be effected within a period of 12 months following the adoption of the programme in question. 3) the need to speed up the selection procedures and make them more transparent: it was important to simplify and speed up the application and selection procedures in order to make it easier for small and medium-sized entreprises, research centres and universities to take part in the specific programmes. 4) information for the EP: the work programme drawn up by the Commission setting out in detail the scientific and technological objectives and specifying the stages in the implementation of the programme as well as the proposed financial arrangements should be forwarded to the EP along with any updated versions. 5) comitology: the EP reiterated its support for consultative committees rather than regulatory committees. It also recommended that any expenses involved in taking part in the committees should be borne by the Member States. 6) international agreements: the EP proposed extending the scope of the negotiations undertaken by the Commission with a view to involving, through international agreements, third countries in Europe in the RTD programmes, so as to also include third countries in the Mediterranean. Environment and climate. From the outset, the EP stressed that this programme should be incorporated into a general European Union strategy with a view to fulfilling international undertakings entered into following the Rio Conference and, in particular, those relating to a reduction in greenhouse gases. The EP added a further theme to the three themes included in the Commission proposal: that of the "human dimensions of environmental change". This fourth theme would cover activities in four areas of research: 1 - Social and economic causes and effects of environmental change 2 - Economic and social responses to environmental issues 3 - Sustainable development and technological change 4 - Integration of scientific knowledge and of economic and social considerations in the formulation of environmental policies. In order to ensure funding for the research activities under this fourth theme, the EP proposed reducing the percentages allocated to the other three themes. Furthermore, the EP stressed that priority should be given to projects submitted by SMEs, provided that they were of equal scientific value. It supported the creation of regional interdisciplinary research networks responsible for studying the specific problems of "given land and sea areas of Europe" such as the Mediterranean Sea, the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the Alps. Within the first theme - "Natural environment, environmental quality and global change", the EP proposed the creation of a coordinating centre for the collection and evaluation of seismic data using the structures already in place at the JRC. The exploitation of data in the area of seismic risks should provide the basis for the elaboration of adequate building standards to guard against such risks and permit the appraisal of the technical solutions required to rationalise and improve the effectiveness of operations following a disaster. Within the second theme - "Environmental technologies" - the EP proposed the inclusion of a fifth area of activity concerning "technologies and methods to protect human health and improve industrial safety". The aim of research in this field was mainly to develop methods and technologies for the assessment and management of the risks of industrial accidents. As far as the third theme was concerned - "Space techniques applied to environmental monitoring and research" - the EP recommended

an improvement in the European technical capacity in the acquisition of data from space. This data and these technologies should meet the needs of the European Environment Agency. Moreover, in order to ensure optimum use of the data obtained by satellite for environmental purposes, it was important to improve cooperation between users. In this respect, the EP called for research to identify user requirements with regard to the Union's policy for satellite services and to develop new instruments on the basis of these requirements. Parliament also stressed the need to involve developing countries' scientific institutions in the research on global change carried out under the specific environment and climate programme. It emphasised the fact that this programme should be carried out in coordination with Action II of the fourth framework programme - Cooperation with third countries.