Specific research programme RTD: biomedicine and health (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. Biomedecine and health. The EP stressed that, together with reinforcing the bases of undertakings, this research should help to promote medical advances with the aim of improving health in the Member States. All the results of the research should be made public by being published in appropriate scientific journals and no patents for projects financed by the EU would be granted to any individual organisation or enterprise. The EP extended the list of diseases to be covered by the research to include those caused by unidentified agents; it also proposed providing resources for research on biomedical engineering alongside human genome research and brain research. With regard to cancer research, it was in favour of giving priority to projects relating to therapeutic approaches. Nevertheless, it pointed out that the quality of life as a parameter for treatment assessment should be considered "while respecting individual freedom of choice and the ethical rules seeking to protect human dignity at the end of life...". It also proposed that research should be carried out into the causal relationships between environmental factors and the development of cancer. Pharmaceuticals research should respect the rules for pre-normative research as well as the ethical, social and legal aspects of research on new drugs; as far as possible, it should reduce or replace animal experimentation by using mathematical modelling systems. Brain research should aim to promote appropriate and effective treatment of neural diseases. With regard to human genome research, the EP was in favour of taking account of the most recent progress in molecular genetics but underlined the importance of respecting the ethical, social and legal aspects relating to research on the human genome. The EP also stressed that no support would be given under this research programme to contributions to the international efforts to analyse the genetic basis of ethnic diversity (Human Genome Diversity Project). As far as the EP was concerned, priority should be given to projects relating to therapeutic approaches. As far as research on occupational health was concerned, the EP stated that the genetic screening of workers to determine genetic predispositions to risk factors in the workplace was not acceptable and, as a result, such research would not be financed under this specific programme. Nonetheless, the EP supported

research into connections between environmental factors (e.g. toxins) and illness (e.g. cancer) as well as further research in the field of allergic disorders and their implications for public health. With regard to public health research, it highlighted the impact of nutrition on health and supported the comparison of nutritional data from the various Member States. As far as research on biomedical ethics was concerned, the EP recommended that no assistance should be provided for projects which contravened the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations and, once it entered into force, the Council of Europe Convention on Bioethics. Finally, with regard to the breakdown of the amount set aside for this programme, the EP proposed a different subdivision into activities and structure from those proposed by the Commission.