Science and technology: guidelines for future European Union policy to support research

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Pia Elda LOCATELLI (PES, IT) on guidelines for future EU policy to support scientific and technological research.

MEPs believed that more funding was needed for research and innovation if Europe was to become more competitive. The European Research Area would become a reality only if a larger share of research funding was channelled via the EU. They therefore wanted the percentage of Member States ' GDP represented by the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) budget to be at least doubled and not put up for discussion during the negotiations on the financial perspective. They also called on the Commission to plan the FP7 in line with its proposals for the 2007-2013 financial perspective and to stick to its position that the EU budget needs to be set at a figure significantly higher than 1% of GDP.

The committee stressed the importance of continuity between the 6th and 7th Framework Programmes but called for procedures to be made clearer and simpler. The main research areas should reflect the strategic priorities of the Lisbon agenda. The programme should also be influenced by a genuine debate among EU and national institutions, the scientific community and industry. Although MEPs welcomed the Commission's decision to include space research as well as security and defence, they also wanted to see support for research into the life sciences, nanotechnologies, ICT, chemicals and all present and future energy sources which do not produce CO2 (including nuclear energy).

The committee feared that the EU's competitiveness could gradually decline if it did not invest sufficiently in basic and long-term research. MEPs therefore wanted the European Research Council proposed by the Commission to be set up swiftly, although they stressed it must avoid duplication with existing bodies such as the Joint Research Centre. The aim of the Research Council should be to provide EU support for basic research. It must have adequate funding and avoid generating more red tape.

Lastly, MEPs called for priority to be given to promoting women's access and career advancement in the field of research and wanted Member States to reassess their education systems with a view to a greater take-up of science in general in schools and universities.