

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
RESEARCH COMMITTEE

– CREST –
Secretariat

CREST 1202/04

NOTE

to : Crest delegations

**Subject : DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE 292nd MEETING OF THE
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE (CREST)
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 29 JANUARY 2004**

The meeting was chaired by Dr. MITSOS (European Commission, Director General for Research).

1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA

The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in communication CM 212/04 of 16 January 2004.

2. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE 291st MEETING

The Committee approved the summary conclusions as set out in doc. CREST 1201/04.

3. INFORMATION FROM THE PRESIDENCY AND THE COMMISSION

Messrs. ENGLISH and HALPIN (Irish Presidency) informed the Committee about the work plan of the Irish Presidency, and the agenda of the High Level Dublin Castle Symposium, scheduled to be held on 16/17 February 2004, on "Europe's Search for excellence in basic research". An information brochure on the priorities of the Presidency, as well as a draft agenda for the Dublin seminar was distributed.

The Irish Presidency also informed CREST of work ongoing in the High Level Group on Competitiveness and the Research Working Party with a view to the preparation of a key issues and priorities paper as an input from the Competitiveness Council to the Spring European Council.

Concerning the 3% objective, the Irish Presidency called on all delegations to transmit the necessary information to the Commission so that the "snapshot" exercise of collecting the latest data on RTD expenditures in the EU could be finalized.

Concerning space research, the Presidency was preparing an exchange of views in the March Council with the aim of approving Council conclusions on the White Paper on Space policy in the May Council.

Mr. ESCRITT (Commission services) informed the Committee on the implementation of the Sixth Framework programme. 160 major partnerships (integrated projects and networks) were now operating, and 99,4% of the budget for the first calls had been allocated (93,2% of the money disbursed). In addition, 2,5 MEURO had been allocated under the "regions of knowledge" initiative. Practical steps have included:

- The modifications of work programmes (current and planned);
- Provision of additional information with a view to increasing the performance and attractiveness of the Networks of Excellence instrument;

- Analysis of the project evaluation process: results from the peer reviewers are encouraging;
- Success rate: over-subscription may be smaller than a first assessment might suggest. While the success-rate is globally about one in six on the basis of all received proposals, it is about one in two if only those projects that pass evaluation as scientifically excellent are taken into account;
- SME participation is and continues to be the subject of discussions in the horizontal programme committee;
- International relations: the Association of Switzerland to FP 6 and the Scientific and Technological Co-operation Agreement with Mexico were signed in January 2004;
- The proposals for amending the financial reference amount of the sixth framework programmes, in order to take account of enlargement, were submitted by the Commission in December 2003 and are soon to be adopted.

Responding to questions from Delegations, Mr. ESCRITT gave the following additional information concerning:

- future work of the CREST Evaluation Network (Austria), and possible modalities for exchange of information on evaluation initiatives of Member States (United Kingdom): CREST would receive the 5-year-assessment report from the independent high-level group of experts; it would also be helpful for Member States to disseminate their own national evaluation studies through CREST. The Chairman, Dr. MITSOS, noted that there were evaluations at three different levels: analysing the peer review on project evaluation; evaluation of the new instruments - the Marimón report; and the five-year-evaluation of RTD policy. As regards the five-year-evaluation, the Chairman suggested that the experiences of the CREST evaluation network could be included on the agenda of a future meeting;
- state of allocation of resources under past research framework programmes (Germany): there are still some payments pending from previous framework programmes, but the sums involved are insignificant;

- the state of play concerning the proposal for a Directive on mobility of third-country researchers (Germany): the Commission was currently working on a proposal that would be submitted to the Council shortly.

4. EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA AND RELATED ISSUES

a) BRIEFING BY COMMISSIONER BUSQUIN

Commissioner BUSQUIN briefed the Committee on recent developments and general priorities of the European Community's research policy, underlining the importance of the contribution of CREST to the implementation of the 3% Action Plan and the mutual opening of national RTD programmes. The CREST pilot actions on opening up of national RTD programmes are gradually being transformed into ERA-NET projects, and the Commissioner specifically asked for information on the performance of this new instrument in individual Member States.

The Commissioner underlined the importance of the integration of basic research into a future Framework Programme through the creation of a European Research Council, and better exploitation of research and development results through the Community patent and enhanced support for technology and knowledge transfer to stimulate innovation.

The Commissioner noted that there had been some problems concerning some of the Networks of Excellence. He expressed his commitment to a thorough evaluation of the new instruments of FP 6 and his willingness to examine possible improvements to the instruments.

The Commissioner also noted that the Commission was actively evaluating the potential of technology platforms for the different industrial sectors. Already it had become clear that individual technology platforms would vary considerably in their size, depending on the areas tackled, and the private sector had a key role to play in their success.

The Commissioner stressed the important role of CREST as an interface between the Commission and Member States. Strengthening the open method of co-ordination should be further discussed, for instance by devising something similar to the Bologna process, which had been successful in education.

Delegations thanked the Commissioner for his presentation¹.

b) OPENING UP OF NATIONAL RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

Mr. SMITS (Commission services) informed the Committee on the state of play concerning the implementation of the ERA-NET scheme from the Commission perspective. Some of these co-ordination actions could pave the way for the setting up of Art. 169 initiatives following the EDCTP (European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Platform) experience. As all five original CREST clusters are now being converted into ERANET projects, it would appear that CREST could play a role in the co-ordination of national programmes by:

- identifying possible new areas/topics at national level;
- mobilising participation from regional RTD programmes;
- discussing best practices for upgrading programme co-ordination.

Delegations expressed unanimous support for ERANET, and further supported the idea that CREST could take up a second batch of clusters concerning the mutual opening up of national RTD programmes.

¹ Reactions to some of the points raised in the Commissioner's intervention are covered under the relevant agenda items.

The Chairman, Dr. MITSOS, concluded that

- CREST should start working on defining candidate areas for a second wave of fields/topics;
- a Commission note would be sent to Members on developing the role of CREST in the field of co-ordination of national programmes;

c) 3% OBJECTIVE: INFORMATION ON WORK IN PROGRESS

Mr. SARAGOSSI (Commission services) informed the Committee on the implementation of the Action Plan, in particular:

- the timetable of forthcoming meetings of the five OMC-3% expert groups;
- Overview of activities (studies, independent expert groups etc.) initiated by the Commission in support of the implementation of actions in the field of public support of research and its impact, public research programmes, IPR and technology transfer, state aid, financing instruments, regional aspects, industrial R&D monitoring and reporting;
- Preliminary results of the "snapshot" overview of recent and planned RTD public spending in the Member States, including tax revenues foregone through fiscal incentives to R&D;
- the European Industrial R&D scoreboard, with delegations being reminded that their inputs were expected by mid-February. So far only one country had provided the information on the top-20 RTD national industrial performers.

The Chairman, Dr. MITSOS, concluded by announcing that progress reports from the five expert groups and the HLG on human resources would be presented to the next meeting of CREST. As previously agreed, CREST would have the task of drawing up a synthesis report on the basis of these inputs.

5. INFORMATION RELATING TO INITIATIVES RECENTLY ADOPTED BY THE COMMISSION

The Chairman, Dr. MITSOS, underlined the need to avoid duplication with the work of the Research Working Party and Coreper, stressing that this point was largely for information purposes.

a) FUNDAMENTAL RESEARCH IN EUROPE

Mr. SMITS (Commission services) informed the Committee on the results of the Mayor report and presented the Commission communication "Europe and basic research"¹ which is currently being discussed by the competent Council bodies with a view to adopting Council conclusions. This is also the topic of the High Level Dublin Castle Symposium, to be held on 16/17 February 2004, on "Europe's Search for excellence in basic research", which will inter alia discuss the recommendation of the Mayor report to set up a European Research Council.

In the course of discussion, and in response to the Commissioner's intervention, some delegations stated that additional evidence should be considered before taking the decision on substantial investment in basic research at EU level. According to recent research undertaken by Sir David KING for the United Kingdom, the performance of the European Union in research was more positive than expected. Weaknesses were more related to innovation and bringing new inventions to the market.

The Chairman, Dr. MITSOS, concluded that a discussion on basic research, related to issues such as the organisation at national level of basic research schemes (e.g. funding, criteria), should figure on the agenda of one of the next meetings of CREST.

¹ Doc. 5598/04 RECH 9 - COM(2004)9 final.

b) RESULTS OF THE INITIAL PHASE OF GMES

Mr. BREGER (Commission services) informed the Committee on the feasibility assessment contained in the report on the initial period of GMES, and the adoption, by the Commission, of the communication "Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES): Establishing a GMES capacity by 2008 - Action Plan (2004-2008)"¹.

An open governance structure (GMES Advisory Board and GMES Programme Office) will be responsible for overseeing the implementation phase. GMES also plays an important role as the European contribution to the Earth Observation Summit (a US initiative which is now co-chaired by Japan, the EU, and South Africa).

c) SECURITY RESEARCH

Ms. PRISTA (Commission services) informed the Committee on the Commission communication concerning "the implementation of the Preparatory Action on the enhancement of the European industrial potential in the field of Security research: towards a programme to advance European security through Research and Technology"². Moreover, a group of personalities (including Commissioners BUSQUIN and LIIKANEN, as well as participants from industry, MEPs and Members of national parliaments) will produce a report entitled "A Vision for research for a secure Europe", containing recommendations for a future security research programme.

It is recalled that the Preparatory Action is based on the 1999 inter-institutional agreement, and will receive its funding from outside the RTD framework programme.

¹ Doc. 6094/04 RECH 20 ENV 81 COSDP 53 TRANS 57 - COM(2004)65 final.

² Doc. 6092/04 RECH 19 COSDP 52 - COM(2004)72 final.

d) THIRD-COUNTRY RESEARCHERS

Mr. LIBERALI (Commission services) informed the Committee on the state of play concerning the mobility of third-country researchers.

It is recalled that the Council on 10 November 2003 adopted a Resolution on the profession and the career of researchers within the European Research Area (ERA)¹, based on discussion of the Commission's Communication "Researchers in ERA: one profession, multiple careers"¹.

The Commission is currently preparing proposals for a Directive and two Recommendations, asking Member States to facilitate short-period entries and to give their own research organisations a central role in certifying the quality of the foreign researcher and his research. Border authorities would simply have to verify the identity of the researcher and the absence of any risk to public security, health or public order. The definition of "researcher" would be the one agreed in the OECD's Frascati manual.

6. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING (1-2 APRIL, 2004)

The next meeting of CREST is scheduled to take place in Galway, Ireland. At this stage, the following agenda items are envisaged:

- Presentation of Irish RTD policy;
- 3% action plan: presentation and discussion of the interim reports from the expert groups;
- FP 6 implementation, including the role for SMEs;
- Opening of national RTD programmes - list of potential questions;
- Basic research; experiences from national research councils;
- Crest evaluation network.

¹ O.J. C 282 , 25/11/2003 P. 0001 - 0002.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Following an initiative from the Presidency, the Committee recommended that the competent Council bodies should take account of the results of the "snapshot" exercise (concerning public research expenditure in the EU) conducted in CREST in their work on an input from the Competitiveness Council to the Spring European Council 2004.
