

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
RESEARCH COMMITTEE

– CREST –
Secretariat

CREST 1204/05

NOTE

To: CREST

Subject : DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE 301st MEETING OF THE
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE (CREST)
HELD IN MONDORF-LES-BAINS ON 23/24 MAY 2005

The meeting was chaired by Mr ESCRITT (European Commission, Director).

1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA

The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in communication CM 1670/05 of 4 May 2005.

2. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE 300th MEETING

The Committee approved the summary conclusions from the last meeting of 18 March 2005 as set out in doc. 1203/1/05 CREST REV 1.

3. INFORMATION FROM THE PRESIDENCY AND THE COMMISSION

a) Mr DIEDERICH (Luxembourg Presidency) informed the Committee on:

- the results of the Competitiveness Council held in Luxembourg on 18 April 2005;
- the ongoing work on the 7th Framework Programme proposal;

- the ITER negotiations timetable;
- the preparatory work on the research items to be dealt with at the Competitiveness Council on 6/7 June 2005;
- the preparations for the second European Space Council to take place in accordance with the EC/ESA Framework Agreement on 7th June (afternoon);
- a conference on the simplification of administrative procedures to take place in Luxembourg on 16 and 17 June 2005.

b) Mme DE LA TORRE (Commission services) informed the Committee on

- the state of preparation of the proposals for the specific programmes;
- the "European Researchers 2005" event scheduled for 8th June;
- the planned "European Researchers' Night" to take place in different cities in Member States on 23 September 2005;

Following requests made by the NL delegation, the Presidency gave additional information on the progress on the "Integrated Guidelines" at Council level. The Commission also indicated that there would be a Commission document on Joint Technological Initiatives in the near future.

4. PRESENTATION OF THE LUXEMBOURG NATIONAL RESEARCH POLICY

Mr KERGER (Luxembourg Presidency) presented the Luxembourg National Research Policy. The presentation focussed on developments in funding during the preceding years, the role of key actors in national research policy and the types of instruments used.

Delegations showed particular interest in the international dimension of the Luxembourg research landscape, the targets for research expenditure in the context of the Lisbon strategy, the distribution of R&D efforts between disciplines in the context of FP 6 and 7, as well as the relationship between the public and the private sector in this field.

5. 7TH RESEARCH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

- Presentation of the proposals by the Commission

Mrs DE LA TORRE (Commission services) gave an overview and an update on the proposal for the 7th EU Research Framework Programme.

The priorities and structure of FP 7 seem to have been broadly welcomed by delegations in the discussions which have so far taken place within the Council; further detailed discussion will be necessary on a number of issues, especially in the context of the proposals for the specific programmes which should be available in autumn. This would also include further details on, for example, new Joint Technology Initiatives, Art. 171 and Art. 169 initiatives.

Discussion on the proposals focussed on questions such as

- the role of CREST in the FP 7 preparation;
- the choice and structure of possible Joint Technological Initiatives;
- the role of assessment and evaluation as means of adapting FP 7 activities during the period (2007-2013) foreseen for the programme;
- administrative procedures and simplification;
- the role and importance of knowledge dissemination;
- the regional dimension;
- the reasons for not continuing certain instruments or for modifying them;
- the role of the European Research Council (ERC).

The Chair concluded that the debate on FP 7 would continue in the relevant fora. In parallel with the work on the specific programmes in Council and the EP, CREST could - in the light of suggestions from delegations - contribute significantly, for example on topics such as "possible Art. 169 initiatives", "the coordination of national research programmes with Community and international research activities", etc.

6. BASIC RESEARCH

The Committee took note of the presentation on the Lithuanian national basic research system given by Prof. E. BUTKUS (Chairman of the Lithuanian Science Council).

Mr VERLAECKT (Belgian delegation), who acts as rapporteur for the overview of presentations, indicated that the overall picture was still very heterogeneous.

Mr VERLAECKT called for continuing cooperation with delegates in order to obtain comparable information and data with a view to presenting the report at the CREST meeting in Manchester (19/20 October).

7. POSSIBLE INITIATIVES BASED ON ART. 169

Mr SMITS (Commission services) presented a Commission discussion paper on possible new initiatives based on Art. 169.

Art. 169 could constitute a potentially powerful instrument to integrate national research programmes into a joint programme with a financial contribution being made by the Community. The Commission would build on the experience gained from the "European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP)" programme to put forward topics on which Art. 169 initiatives might be useful in the future.

Following a brainstorming meeting in February 2005 with interested parties and the analysis of ongoing ERA-NET activities, the Commission has identified seven "first train"- initiatives which could be mature and six "second train"-initiatives which could be launched after the mid-term review of the Framework Programme (see annexes to the discussion paper distributed to CREST). The Commission requests the views of Member States on the financial integration of national programmes, on their commitment to such initiatives and on the participation of third countries in Art. 169 activities.

Comments by delegations on the possible Art. 169 initiatives focused on

- existing legal barriers in some countries to a contribution from national budgets to a common pool from which research projects are financed;
- the need for a much more detailed analysis of EDCTP before drawing further conclusions on Art. 169 initiatives;
- the interpretation of the criterion of "maturity" for the suggested initiatives vis-à-vis their strategic relevance;
- the need to apply additional criteria such as the economic impacts and overall relevance for competitiveness;
- the envisaged rules for procedures, calls for proposals, administration etc.
- the need to clarify the concept in some of the 13 topics described in the annexes, some of them being strictly thematic, others participant-oriented (SMEs);
- the need to clarify details and receive more information on the content of the initiatives themselves.

A number of delegations expressed the view that the legal and financial framework for a future Art. 169 initiative could be constructed along the same lines as the EDCTP initiative, so that participation would be possible for all interested groups. Delegations pointed out, however, that political commitment to an initiative might be difficult to obtain without more details on the legal and administrative structures being available. Delegations were invited to give further consideration as to how they see financial integration of national research programmes taking place.

Following these remarks the Commission indicated that the "first train" of initiatives could be presented as one package to avoid too many codecision procedures and that the Commission would contribute to the joint research programme, which is to be implemented through projects by the dedicated implementation structure. The Community contribution to an initiative would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis. A high-level seminar on ERA-NET results planned for 21 October would also allow more discussion on lessons on programme co-ordination.

The Commission confirmed that it would present to CREST further information on the state-of-play regarding possible Art. 169 initiatives at a later stage, possibly in the form of a new or updated discussion paper.

8. 3 % AND OPEN METHOD OF CO-ORDINATION

a) Lisbon Strategy: Draft Format for reporting following the "Integrated Guidelines"

Mr GOENAGA (Commission services) presented a draft format for reporting on national initiatives following the adoption of the "Integrated Guidelines" foreseen for the European Council on 16/17 June 2005. Integrated Guidelines No. 7, 8 and 11 would be most important for R&D policy.

Further guidance on the preparation of reports by the Member States could be obtained from a Working Paper by the Commission. The Commission will organise visits and a dialogue with Member States on the national reform programmes. Each Commission delegation would have representatives from various DGs and be headed by a senior Commission official. The visits were planned to last for one day with general issues discussed in the morning and specific issues such as R&D policy in the afternoon. DG RTD would seek to participate in at least some of the visits. Mr Goenaga encouraged delegates to contact the relevant ministries for more information.

The draft format for reporting should be seen as a menu of items to be considered and should ensure some consistency between the reports by Member States. The OMC group on "policy mixes" will discuss the format at a forthcoming meeting, to receive more ideas from Member States.

In their comments on the Commission's approach, delegations focussed on items such as:

- the need for a flexible template in order to take account of various approaches to the reform agendas in the Member States;

- the possibility of basing national reporting on existing documents drawn up, for example, for the mid-term review and not on the very detailed draft format;
- the role and use of indicators and targets which have to be set for 2008 and 2010;
- the need for an assessment of the effectiveness of measures taken as part of the national reform programmes.
- referring to the Commission Staff Paper, the question was raised whether it was the intention to merge the existing reporting to CREST on the OMC 3 % into the National Reform Programmes. Mr SARAGOSSI (Commission) replied that the role of CREST in the OMC 3 % would continue to run parallel to reporting on national policies and would serve broader research policy objectives.

The Chair concluded that further comments on the draft format concerning the Integrated Guidelines dealing with research should be sent to the Commission by the 3rd June.

b) Request from EUROSTAT on statistical input for the snapshot exercise

Mr GOENAGA (Commission services) informed the Committee of EUROSTAT's request on statistical input by Member States for the snapshot exercise. The statistical offices of Member States would have to work very closely with all groups involved to obtain the best possible picture of the situation on national and European levels.

c) Pilot action (call for proposals) to support mutual learning and co-ordination in policy making

Mr GOENAGA (Commission services) informed the Committee of a pilot action to reinforce the impact of OMC to be implemented via a call for proposals. The pilot action will support concerted or joint initiatives between groups of countries and regions interested in policy-coordination in areas involving a transnational dimension. The following policy areas will be open in this call: fiscal measures and research, SMEs and research, IPR and research, the public research base and links with industry and policy-mixes. The call would cover

supporting and co-coordinating activities including studies, conferences and similar actions. The budget would be approximately euro 8 million. It is planned to publish the call in September 2005 with closure in January/February 2006. The participation of at least five Member States or associated countries in an action will be required.

Delegations welcomed the idea of a pilot action as such. However, some doubts were expressed on the outsourcing of work to consultants and similar parties. It should be made clear that Member States must maintain sufficient "ownership" of the process.

d) Future Communication by the Commission: "Investing in European Research: Achievements and the way forward"

Mr SARAGOSSI and Mr ROBIN-CHAMPIGNEUL (Commission services) presented an outline of the forthcoming Commission communication on the 3 % objective, which would be adopted by Mid-July. It should serve the objectives of assessing progress and clarify links to the relaunched Lisbon Strategy. A central point would concern the assessment of the value of modified instruments within the Lisbon process as a way for Member States to increase funding for research and for adaptations to the regulatory environment in some cases.

9. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of CREST is scheduled to take place in Brussels on 1 July 2005.

The agenda could include the following items:

- 3 % objective and Open Method of Co-ordination
= Further information on progress in the working groups;
- Possible Art. 169 initiatives
= Ongoing preparatory work;
- Women and Science
= Continuation of discussion;

Under the incoming UK Presidency CREST meetings will take place on 1 July,
29 September, 19/20 October (Manchester) and 5 December 2005.
