

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
RESEARCH COMMITTEE

– CREST –
Secretariat

CREST 1205/05

NOTE

to : CREST

Subject : **DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE 302nd MEETING OF THE
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE (CREST)
HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 1 JULY 2005**

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

1. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA

The Committee adopted the agenda as set out in communication CM 2298/05 of 21 June 2005.

2. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS OF THE 301st MEETING

The Committee approved the summary conclusions from the last meeting held in Mondorf-les-Bains on 23/24 May 2005 as set out in doc. 1204/05.

3. INFORMATION FROM THE PRESIDENCY AND THE COMMISSION

- a) Mr IBBETT (UK Presidency) informed the Committee on certain research-related key dates during the Presidency. These include:
- the informal Competitiveness Council scheduled in Cardiff for 11-12 July 2005, concerning which a number of background documents were made available to delegates;
 - a conference on the knowledge-based bio-economy scheduled for 15-16 September 2005 in Brussels;
 - a conference on new and emerging science and technologies (NEST) scheduled for 21-22 September 2005 in London;
 - a bioscience conference scheduled for 11 October 2005 in London;
 - the meeting of CREST scheduled for 19/20 October and a meeting of Directors General (Research and Innovation) on 20 October 2005 in Manchester;
 - a conference on the coordination of national research and development programmes on 21 October 2005 in Manchester.
- b) Mme DE LA TORRE (Commission services) informed the Committee on:
- the state of preparation of the proposals for the specific programmes;
 - the publication of the "Annual Report on research and technological development activities of the European Union in 2003" (doc. 10086/05+ ADD 1) which covers the period up to March 2004 and included a chapter on research policy in the Member States;
 - a Commission working paper on European Technology Platforms and Joint Technology initiatives setting out work already undertaken and work for the future;
 - the results of the seminar on simplification of administrative procedures (Luxembourg 16/17 June 2005).

The Committee also took note and congratulated the Commission and Mr Mitsos on the results of the international negotiations on ITER and was informed on the next formal steps to be taken within the Community.

In response to the FR delegation, Mme de la Torre mentioned that the framework for state aids is to be revised before the end of 2005.¹ The topic will, in all likelihood, be taken up at the occasion of a forthcoming CREST meeting, when experts from DG Competition could also be invited to attend.

4. WOMEN AND SCIENCE

Following discussions on this topic on 18 March 2005, the Committee took note of a presentation by Mme T. LEIGH (DG Research, European Commission) on the Commission staff working paper on "Women and Science: Excellence and Innovation"² and on statistical information concerning the latest developments on this subject.

The subsequent discussion focused notably on the following issues:

- improving career prospects, particularly in terms of promoting women into senior research positions as mentioned in the Conclusions from the Competitiveness Council of 18 April 2005³;
- the scope and possible effects of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers⁴;
- the application of the principle of excellence, especially in relation to the European Research Council (ERC);
- the impact of simplification measures in FP 7 on the gender action plan to be issued with each project;

¹ The Commission circulated a consultation document in electronic form following the meeting.

² doc. 7322/05 RECH 58 SOC 124 - SEC (2005) 370.

³ doc. 8194/05 COMPET 74 RECH 85 TOUR 6 ENV 170 SOC 168 + COR 1- Annex II

⁴ doc. 7321/05 RECH 57.

- measures to reconcile career development and the family in general;
- the new priorities and forthcoming action of the Commission.

5. 3 % AND OPEN METHOD OF CO-ORDINATION

- Research issues in national reform programmes and on-going dialogue between Commission and Member States

Mr GOENAGA (Commission services) gave an overview on the state-of-play concerning the preparation of the National Reform Programmes in the Member States. Research and Development Policy will undoubtedly figure prominently in most of the National Reform Programmes, due to the importance attached to the 3 % objective. Furthermore, the dialogue between Commission and Member State representatives has already facilitated a better interpretation of national data. In the light of the document made available to CREST members at the previous meeting, the Commission is now in a position to finalize the template for reporting on 3 % OMC and this will be sent as soon as possible to the national coordinators for the Lisbon Programme. The menu approach will be maintained in the template document.

Several delegations reported on developments regarding the R&D-part of their respective National Reform Programmes; one delegation circulated an interim document on the question.

- Expert groups: Update on the work done and future plans for each topic

The representatives of leading and/or co-leading delegations gave some information on the progress achieved and future work plans in their respective topics for the second cycle.

Mr IBBETT (UK delegation) reported on the progress made on the topic "Improve the design and implementation of national policy-mixes." Three pilot reviews had taken place and would be reflected in a report at the end of 2005. Within these reviews the focus on mutual learning and on substantive feedback for national research policy concepts was underlined. Further reviews, with some countries being examined and others acting as reviewers, would follow. A background paper had already been prepared; further workshops or seminars would be organised before producing the final report.

Mr ROYO (ES delegation) explained that the work on the topic "Promote the reform of public research centres and universities, in particular to promote the transfer of knowledge to society and industry" had been organised using four task forces dealing with different aspects of the subject. Evaluations and peer reviews would be the most important working methods. Specific recommendations for national policy will be prepared; three countries had already been examined in this regard. The dates foreseen for an interim report in September 2005 and the final report for March 2006 would be maintained.

Mr MONARD (BE delegation) presented the five sub-topics within the topic "Design measures to promote the growth of young-research intensive small and medium-sized enterprises". Two of the sub-topics are at the "kick-off" meetings stage (High-growth issues and Public Procurement), one sub-topic (Collaborative networks) is at the presentation stage, "Coaching and training" is at the stage of country responses, whereas the sub-topic "Financing" is at the final stage of reporting and conclusions. A mid-term report on the work of the group as a whole is expected for October 2005.

Mme HAUGE (Norwegian delegation) presented an update on the work plan for the topic "Evaluation methods for fiscal measures". Three detailed reports have been produced so far. The work would focus on various aspects of the topic, in particular the description and analysis of tax incentives in different environments and the assessment of relevant variables, the analysis of existing evaluations, as well as methodological questions and data issues. The next report is foreseen for October 2005.

The Commission also indicated there would be a follow-up in the form of a communication on fiscal measures issued by DG TAXUD.

Mr DARBY (UK delegation) indicated that the work on the topic on "intellectual property rights" is still in the preparatory phase in accordance with the work module presented in April. The activities of this group would probably concentrate on cross-border issues, the explanation of ownership arrangements, Member States' opinions on the necessary skills for professions in the knowledge transfer area and the handling of portfolios by institutes, universities, etc.

Mr GOENAGA (Commission services) welcomed the commitment of all participants, the good management undertaken by the leading countries, as well as the quality of the work of the groups. Insofar as the reports will focus on the overall objectives and actual output, they will be of substantial value for all countries, not only for those participating in the topics.

Mr Goenaga informed CREST that the Commission has elaborated a new set of Key Figures of R&D-indicators similar to earlier sets from previous years. Commissioner Potočník would present the Key Figures at a press conference and will send a letter to research ministers to alert them to some worrying trends in certain figures. An update by the Commission on the 3% objective in the form of a communication is foreseen for autumn 2005. This will describe where Community action would be required.

Further to the previous CREST meeting, Mr Goenaga indicated that to date, not many replies to the request from EUROSTAT on statistical input for the snapshot exercise had been received. He therefore appealed to countries to send in their data as rapidly as possible.

6. Art. 169 INITIATIVES

– Frontier Research

Mr SMITS (Commission services) called the attention of the Committee to a report by High-Level Expert Group on "Frontier Research: The European Challenge" and an accompanying letter by Director General MITSOS.

– Ongoing preparatory work on possible Art. 169 initiatives

The Commission had provided the Committee with templates on six possible first-train Art. 169 initiatives and an overview on possible second-train initiatives. The templates on the first-train initiatives were based on input by national research ministries and other relevant bodies or organisations.

Mr SMITS gave further information on the six¹ templates on

- AAL (Ambient Assisted Living)
- SME ! (Research Performing SMEs)
- EMRP (European Metrology Research Programme)
- EraSME (SME Research Cooperation)
- EHBMP (European Human Biomonitoring Programme)
- BONUS (Joint Baltic Sea Research Programme)

¹ The potential initiative COSINE on embedded systems may be developed into a Joint Technology Initiative in the context of FP 7.

Mr Smits explained that more preparatory work would be needed. The coordinating countries are already known for most potential initiatives, but new participants could of course join. Although the initiatives mentioned for the second train are considered as not being mature at this stage, neither of the two lists should be regarded as closed or fixed. It should not be excluded for example that the two SME-related initiatives will be merged.

The subsequent discussion concentrated on the templates for these potential initiatives and touched also on the important issue of the financial integration of national programmes and resources. Some delegations asked whether Art. 169 would necessarily present the best instrument for all the potential subjects. Others were sceptical as to the heavy administrative structure of an Art. 169 initiative. Some questions arose on the budgetary impact of Art. 169 initiatives and on the danger of replacing national funding by Community funding without added value. Most delegations welcomed, however, the openness of the approach and the possibility of joining an initiative at a later stage. . The possibility of having a kind of an 'evaluation report' for each of the potential first train Article 169 initiatives with special attention to the question of the appropriateness of the instrument for realizing the objective was also mentioned.

On financial integration and possible legal structures for Art. 169 initiatives, the Austrian, German, Greek and Icelandic delegations had given short comments in writing. CREST considered that lessons regarding the financial structure could be learnt from the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership Programme (EDCTP). One delegation took the view that, where there were legal obstacles to contributing to a common pool, a Member State could finance its own participating research teams.

Mr Smits stressed that the decisive criterion for an Art. 169 initiative should be the pooling of common financial resources (in cash or in kind) which would make it more stable than for example an ERA-Net project. The question of the appropriate legal structure should be discussed within each potential initiative and the best way of managing financial integration should be analysed in greater detail.

It was agreed to pursue the discussion on the issue of 'financial integration' at one of the next CREST meetings, and delegations were asked to present written input beforehand in order to facilitate the debate.

- The Art. 169-based European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership Programme (EDCTP): Lessons to be learnt for FP 7

Mr HOEVELER (Commission services) presented an overview of the management features of an Art. 169 initiative, building on experience from the EDCTP.

Even if the EDCTP experience is somewhat exceptional because of the involvement of third countries with which a long-term partnership existed and because of a rather burdensome codecision procedure, some lessons for future Art. 169 initiatives could be learnt. For example, there should be safeguards to avoid time-lags between the commitment and the actual receipt of financial resources. On the positive side, a small executive body seemed to be sufficient and the pooling of common resources has proved to be an attractive feature.

The subsequent discussion focused on other possible improvements for future initiatives such as early information on the actual legal structure and the financial resources required from participants as well as the need to involve financial contributions from the private sector. There was also some discussion on whether contributing to a common pool would actually be a welcomed feature of Art. 169 or a strict legal requirement.

7. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of CREST is scheduled to take place in Brussels on 29 September 2005.

The agenda could include the following:

- 3 % objective and Open Method of Co-ordination (Second cycle)
= Further information on progress in the working groups;
- Possible Art. 169 initiatives
= Financial integration issue;
- Frontier research;
- Five-Year Assessment of the Framework Programme;

and possibly:

- Reform of State-Aid Frameworks and implications for Research Policy;
- Fiscal measures;
- Co-funding of national mobility programmes.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr SEISER (Austrian delegation) provided the Committee with information on a conference relating to the integration of Western Balkans participants in FP 7. It will take place as a High-Level Officials meeting on 24-25 October 2005 in Vienna.
