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2417th Council meeting

– **RESEARCH** –

Brussels, 11 March 2002

President : **Ana María BIRULÉS Y BERTRÁN**
Minister for Science and Technology of the
Kingdom of Spain

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For further information call 32 2 285 6083 or 285 7459

¹ Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.

PARTICIPANTS

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium :

Mr François-Xavier DE DONNEA

Minister-President of the Brussels Capital Regional Government, with responsibility for Local Authorities, Regional Planning, Monuments and Sites, Urban Regeneration and Scientific Research

Mr Yvan YLIEFF

Minister for Science Policy

Denmark :

Mr Helge SANDER

Minister for Science, Technology and Development

Germany :

Mr Peter WITT

Deputy Permanent Representative

Greece :

Mr Apostolos-Athanasios TSOCHATZOPOULOS

Minister for Development

Spain :

Ms Ana María BIRULÉS Y BERTRÁN

Minister for Science and Technology

Mr Ramón MARIMÓN SUÑOL

State Secretary for Science and Technology Policy

France :

Mr Philippe ETIENNE

Deputy Permanent Representative

Ireland :

Mr Noel TREACY

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science and at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (with special responsibility for Science and Technology)

Italy :

Ms Letizia MORATTI

Minister for Education, the Universities and Research

Mr Guido POSSA

Deputy Minister for Education, the Universities and Research

Luxembourg :

Ms Erna HENNICOT-SCHOEPGES

Minister for Culture, Higher Education and Research, Minister for Public Works

Netherlands :

Mr Ian DE JONG

Deputy Permanent Representative

Austria :

Mr Mathias REICHHOLD

Federal Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology

Portugal :

Mr José Mariano GAGO

Minister for Science and Technology

Finland :

Ms Sinikka MÖNKÄRE

Minister for Trade and Industry

Sweden :

Ms Agneta BLADH

State Secretary to the Minister for Education

United Kingdom :

Mr Bill STOW

Deputy Permanent Representative

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Commission :

Mr Philippe BUSQUIN

Member

**RESEARCH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMMES (EC – EURATOM) 2002-2006 – RULES
FOR PARTICIPATION AND SPECIFIC PROGRAMMES**

The Council held a policy debate on certain key issues raised by the proposals for Decisions (rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities, specific programmes) concerning the implementation of the 6th Research Framework Programmes (EC and Euratom).

The debate provided important guidance to the Presidency for steering further work on these proposals whilst awaiting the European Parliament's opinions. The President invited the Committee of Permanent Representatives to pursue detailed discussions on outstanding technical issues so as to enable the Council to proceed rapidly in the decision-making process, bearing in mind the timetable set by the European Council for adoption of the two Framework Programmes by next June and the need to ensure that these important flanking measures are in place in good time. Accordingly, the President invited the Commission to provide all the necessary technical information and textual suggestions with a view to facilitating further discussion on the subject.

In concluding the debate, the President considered that further detailed work is required in particular on the following questions:

Specific programmes

- Issues relating to the competences of the programme committee responsible for assisting the Commission in implementing the EC specific programmes require closer examination. Given the dimension of research projects, in particular those covered by networks of excellence and integrated projects, the measures to be submitted to the committee procedure should be at least equivalent to those in the 5th Framework Programme, adjusted as necessary to cater for the new approach of to the 6th Framework Programme.

- In the light of the preference expressed by a number of delegations for a single programme committee meeting in different configurations to assist the Commission in executing the EC specific programme covering the thematic priorities, more detailed information is required on its practical implementation so as to ensure full clarity, transparency and efficiency of management.

Rules for participation

- Criteria for the evaluation and selection of research actions require more detailed examination, in particular in the context of the competences of the programme committees.
- Further explanations by the Commission are needed concerning the liability of participating consortia. Bearing in mind the need to simplify rules and procedures, the autonomy of consortia should be examined in particular with regard to their contractual arrangements with the Commission. The question of financial liability needs to be addressed in further detail. The interests of all participants, including in particular SMEs, need to be safeguarded.
- The question of general support and preferential support to national fusion teams in the context of EURATOM research requires further examination to ensure a satisfactory transition from the 5th to the 6th Framework Programme and to achieve a correct balance between progress on ITER and national efforts in fusion research.

**EUROPEAN SPACE STRATEGY – FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT WITH THE
EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY**

The Council took note of a presentation by Commissioner BUSQUIN of the proposed negotiating directives for the conclusion of a Framework Agreement between the EC and the European Space Agency (ESA), and held a brief exchange of views.

The President asked the Permanent Representatives Committee to examine the proposal as soon as possible, to enable the Council to approve the negotiating directives at an early date.

The objective is to promote the development of a European space policy and the complementary roles of the ESA and the EC. The proposal responds to a request made by the Council at its meeting on 10 December 2001 and paves the way for the holding of a "Space Council", an informal meeting of EU Ministers and the ESA Council, in 2002.

THERMONUCLEAR FUSION – ITER

The Council noted a presentation by Commissioner BUSQUIN, in the context of the 6th EURATOM Research Framework Programme, of:

- a proposal for an amendment of the negotiating directives for the ITER experimental reactor (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor);
- a working document analysing the cost of ITER.

The President asked the Permanent Representatives Committee to examine the proposal as soon as possible, to enable the Council to approve the negotiating directives at an early date.

The aim of the proposal is to allow the European Union to make more rapid progress with the other partners toward the next stage in ITER cooperation, in the light of developments regarding the possible site of the future experimental reactor, the cost and the need to act more rapidly in the sphere of fusion research.

LIFE SCIENCES AND BIOTECHNOLOGY

The Council took note of a presentation by the Commission of its communication entitled "Life sciences and biotechnology – a strategy for Europe". Following the requests made by the Stockholm and Göteborg European Councils, the Commission had undertaken wide-ranging consultations, resulting in this strategy document intended for Barcelona.

In this context the President stressed the importance the Council attached to biotechnology in many areas of economic and social life.

OTHER BUSINESS– ***Bioterrorism***

The Council noted information provided by Commissioner BUSQUIN on the progress made by the group of experts set up following the attacks of 11 September 2001 to improve coordination between Member States on bioterrorism research.

– ***COST research***

At the initiative of the Portuguese Minister, the Council held a brief exchange of views on European Cooperation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research (COST), which enabled delegations to stress the importance they attached to this form of cooperation in the context of the efforts under way to create a European Research Area.

