



From the Minister of State
for Industry and Information Technology

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Dear John

**EUROPEAN COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME OF COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES IN
THE FIELD OF RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT (1987-1991)**

At their last meeting on 29 October the Commons Select Committee on European legislation considered a proposal from the Commission of the European Communities for a draft Council Regulation concerning a Framework Programme for European Community research and development (EC R & D) activities (document no 8764/86). The Committee concluded that the document was politically important and for debate and further recommended that a Standing Committee debate would be suitable. I am therefore writing to ask you for an early consideration of this document within L Committee so that arrangements for the debate may proceed as quickly as possible.

Earlier this year OD(E) agreed that one of the objectives for the United Kingdom Presidency of the Community should be a successful outcome to the negotiations on the EC R & D Framework Programme. I have already chaired one meeting of the Research Council which concentrated solely on the Commission's proposals and encouraging progress was made. Over the next few weeks I am planning a series of bilateral meetings with my Ministerial colleagues to try to establish common ground on the central issues of total cost and the distribution of finance between different research areas. OD(E) and E(A) will be considering the United Kingdom's final negotiating position later this month.

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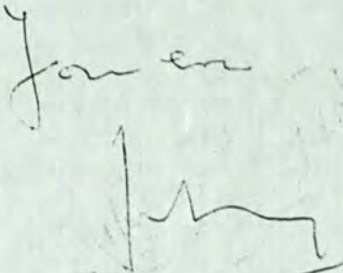


Subject to their views and the outcome of my bilateral meetings, my aim will be to work for agreement in principle on the Framework at the next Council on 9 December. We will not be able to adopt the decision formally on that day but, subject to the European Parliament's view, it might just be possible to do so before the end of the year. I would like if possible therefore to complete the scrutiny procedures before the next Research Council and would like to suggest 3 December as a date for the Standing Committee.

The Commission's proposal provides for a wide-ranging research programme costed at some 7.7 billion ecus (£5.5 billion). The main emphasis of the proposal is on programmes aimed at promoting Europe's industrial competitiveness, a significant change from the present programme which is heavily oriented towards energy research. The proposals are of particular significance in that for the first time Community research and development programmes will have a legal basis under the Treaty as provided under the new technology section of the Single European Act.

I expect that the form of the Government Motion will be the conventional take note motion. Again subject to the outcome of OD(E) and E(A) discussion I expect that the Government line will be to welcome the proposed re-orientation towards industrial competitiveness, to recognise the commitments given at previous European Councils to the desirability of an increase in the proportion of Community resources to be spent on research and development but to argue that the Commission's proposed expenditure is excessive both in terms of the kind of research programmes proposed and the ability of the Commission to manage efficiently an increase of the order of magnitude they have requested.

I should be grateful for L Committee's agreement that I should proceed on these lines.

John

GEOFFREY PATTIE

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