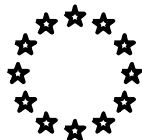


2001

**EXTERNAL MONITORING REPORT
ON THE
SPECIFIC PROGRAMME
FOR
RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGICAL
DEVELOPMENT**



**IN THE FIELD OF
QUALITY OF LIFE AND MANAGEMENT
OF LIVING RESOURCES**

This is part of the series of the external annual monitoring reports prepared for the EC Framework Programme and the Euratom Framework Programme, and their constituent Specific Programmes, and also -as a novelty- covers also the implementation of the European Research Area (ERA) related activities.

The Commission has over the years been placing increasing emphasis on the evaluation of Community R & D activities. With the overall Reform of the Commission, evaluation activities are more and more placed at the heart of the decision process.

In line with this continuous effort for improvement, a revised programme monitoring scheme has been introduced in 2001, based on the system launched in 1995 which involved independent external experts in the monitoring activities. The new mechanism launched this year has been built in order to better involve the experts monitoring the implementation of ERA and specific programmes, by representing them in the Framework programme Panel. The timely response by the Programme management to the recommendations produced by the experts will be enhanced, providing the basis for a quick response mechanism to programme developments, as the follow up of experts' recommendations will be receiving still more attention.

This Report is the third covering the Fifth Framework Programme; the report also highlights progress in relation to implementation of ERA and results and impact of previous Framework Programmes. The report should help to reinforce the establishment of best practices and identify the scope for further improvements in programme implementation.

The Report consists of two parts:

Part A: *External monitoring report prepared by the following independent external experts:*

Dr Chiara Cerletti (Chair)

Prof Grahame W Gould (Rapporteur)

Prof Ana Pelacho

Part B: *Responses of the Programme management to the external monitoring report*

PART A:

Report of the external Monitoring Panel

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Panel made their assessment based on extensive interviews with QoL staff, examination of much documentation, and consultation with Programme Committee members.

Despite heavy workloads, Directors, Section Heads, Scientific Officers and support staff effectively met management targets in 2001, including:

- *Positive reaction to general and specific recommendations of the 2000 Monitoring Panel
- *Completion of many FP5 projects, and progress with dissemination of results
- *Effective support of strategies to build ERA
- *Work to lay the basis for the 6th Framework Programme

Our Report includes a number of recommendations, including:

- *More accurate prediction/assessment of projects' final outputs and outcomes
- *Improvement of support for Demonstration-type projects
- *Initiatives to improve "pre-emptivity"
- *Establishment of some sort of "patenting advice and encouragement" system
- *Actions to improve SME involvement in some Countries
- *Acquisition of full gender data from project proposers and collaborators
- *Wider use of intranets to aid project management
- *Clarification of PC roles, and of PC/EAG interface
- *More use of two-step selection, and "calls for expressions of interest"
- *Improved means for the selection of project evaluators, including the use of Scientific Societies to advise
- *Consideration, once again, of the possibility of sending at least project summaries to evaluators before the evaluation sessions
- *Support for more Workshops (staff time permitting!)
- *Improvement of information flow through the involvement of Scientific Societies, their Newsletters, and Journals where appropriate
- *Substantial simplification of all procedures involved in management of the Programme.

2. PANEL METHODOLOGY

Given the relatively short time available, the limited number of members in the Panel, and the large scope of the task, the Panel concentrated on identifying specific issues, as outlined in the Broad Guidelines and by the Framework Programme Panel.

The monitoring exercise consisted of face-to-face interviews, supported by extensive documentation. Of particular importance was the self-assessment document, which was given to the panel on 21 November 2001 and expanded on verbally thereafter.

Specifically, the Panel undertook interviews with the Directors of the QoL programme, the Unit Heads of the different Key Actions (KA) and Generic Activities (GA), Heads of Policy Units for Biomedicine & Health, and for Biotechnology, Agriculture & Food, the Coordinators of SME and Newly Associated States (NAS) activities, of “Science and Gender in Research” and “Ethics.” Based on their high levels of expertise, Commission staff provided excellent, straightforward information. The Panel is especially grateful for the abundant cooperation and the open-minded character of the discussion throughout the whole exercise, and in particular to Jean-Luc Sanne, who ensured that we correctly followed the requirements of the monitoring exercise.

Information relevant to the monitoring exercise was also obtained by each expert on a personal basis, from people working at the Commission and from Coordinators of Projects within this area. Telephone interviews were also performed, and written submissions obtained, from randomly sampled members of the Programme Committee from different countries.

This Report does not reiterate all the information supplied, but attempts to summarise the Panel's decision process in a transparent and reproducible form. Conclusions presented embrace general suggestions, more long-term strategic considerations, and the actual recommendations, which are given in italics within the body of the text.

3. INTRODUCTION

The programme Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources is one of the seven Specific Programmes of the Fifth Framework Programme (1998-2002). It consists of six Key Actions, which are oriented at improving the quality of life of European citizens, with a focus on the quality and safety of food and nutrients, controlling infectious disease, using the biological cells as the primary sources of products and healthy organisms, bridging environmental factors and health issues such as allergies, encouraging the sustainable development of agriculture, fisheries and forestry, and selecting the ageing population as a priority global subject for the European society. In addition to the six Key Actions the Programme supports research activities of a generic nature including areas of strategic importance for both the present and the future, such as genome research, neurosciences, public health, cardiovascular, tumoral and other chronic diseases, with special attention being given to socio-economic and ethical issues surrounding the biosciences.

The programme has taken into consideration the emerging issue of the European Research Area, the establishment of which will constitute a main goal of the Sixth Framework Programme.

The major events of 2001 included the third call for Generic Activities, the sixth call for Accompanying Measures and two calls for Marie Curie Fellowships. Two deadlines for the six Key Actions were also established in 2001. Moreover active participation in activities related to biodiversity, genetically modified organisms, Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies and biotechnology were also performed. In the context of poverty reduction, programs have been proposed to fight against three major communicable diseases: HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Evaluation sessions and contract negotiations have been the primary objective of all Key Actions and Generic Activities, as well as the follow-up of running contracts from FP3, FP4 and FP5 projects.

Several workshops and conferences have been organized on important traditional or emerging topics.

The financial situation reportedly shows an execution of 581 410 845 euros in 2001 for the total specific programme (excluding interventions), which corresponds to 99,78% of the commitment for year considered.

Perspectives for the next year include completion of the evaluations and negotiations for the remaining calls, follow-up of ongoing projects, deepening the effort of elaborating the concept of ERA and meeting the total budget commitment.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 STRATEGY - OBJECTIVES

4.1.1 Progress in ERA and programmes implementation

Progress within the QoL programme towards the establishment of ERA is occurring rapidly and effectively. It will be important to accept that a considerable learning period will be needed by prospective proposers and applicants for the various newly oriented types of support that will probably be available in FP6.

A number of changes have already been introduced during 2001 to contribute to ERA objectives, with results expected from 2002 onwards. It is foreseen that the future under ERA will result in larger sized projects. Considering that some data (e.g. see the Impact Assessment of Biomed2, 1994-1998) seem to question the assumed higher quality of outcome of large versus small projects, *the evaluation system of projects under ERA should consider the implementation of measures to make more accurate predictions in terms of the quality of the projects' final outputs and outcomes (including publications, patents and commercial exploitation etc).*

Moves towards coordination of National Programmes with those of other Member States are perceived as necessary and most useful. Networking whereby the Commission can contribute to the coordination of National Programmes, rather than duplicating what already exists, are therefore agreed to be particularly important.

Programme implementation in general is sound, except for Demonstration Projects. There have been few answers to the calls for these (only about 1% of the total number of proposals), although we believe that Demonstration Project concept is potentially very valuable. The reason for the disappointing number of applications is probably mainly the low percentage of cost that is covered by the funding. *This could usefully be revisited with the aim of making such projects more attractive.*

The 29% success rate for Thematic Networks was considerably higher than for the other types of projects (19% for Concerted Actions and 18% for Shared Cost RTD). The highest success rate was for Accompanying Measures and for Marie Curie Fellowships.

Considering the long timescale of each Framework Action, it is important to retain some level of flexibility in order to react to suddenly emerging problems. The most important of the major emerging research-sensitive trends are effectively addressed by the Life Sciences High Level Group, established in April 2000, which consists of eminent senior scientists from outside of the Commission structures, and advises on major aspects of strategy. The Group attracts good national involvement, and is already making a useful impact. For example, a conference on "Genetics and the Future of Europe" resulted from one of their first initiatives. Reaction to new problems arising during the period analysed has been efficient, but it would still be useful to examine possible means for even more rapid and effective responses, and to consider possible routes towards quicker more pre-emptive approaches to new problems (e.g. TSEs; bioterrorism) early in their emergence, or even their pre-emergence if identifiable. (How can these interventions, in terms of rapidity and efficacy, be evaluated?). *Perhaps EAGs also could take "pre-emptivity" on board, e.g. as a "standing item" in their meetings?*

4.1.2 Significant results in the European and international context

In the European context there has clearly been good progress and many significant results, but we so far lack a standard system to quantify and qualify these results (e.g. lists of publications; patents; new commercial products; demonstrations emerging from previous projects). Consequently, this does not allow one to establish a ranking of the results. Acquisition of such data will, in turn, lead to improvements in the evaluation of future projects and to increases in the success of European research.

Commission policy generally tends to keep European research rather isolated from other leader countries in the scientific field, such as the USA and Japan, though with notable exceptions, e.g. the EU-USA Taskforce on Biotechnology, and a special initiative between the EU and the USA on Food Safety. The international context of European research in QoL could usefully be strengthened further. For instance, by promoting additional contacts with non-European countries, as has occurred in these particular cases; by favouring the participation of EU researchers in scientific meetings outside the EU; even by regularly inviting key US or Japanese experts to be involved in evaluations, which has also occurred, and proved to be valuable, in special cases.

Special attention (meetings of researchers, legal experts, and members of the European Patent Office (EPO)) has been sensibly given to patenting in some contentious areas (e.g. patenting of genes). We understand that there is a different ethos in different countries regarding patenting, which may well take many years to influence. However, bearing in mind the relatively poor European patenting rate generally, e.g. versus the USA, *some sort of central patenting advice centre or related mechanism, perhaps with help from the EPO, would provide a potentially useful source of information, help and encouragement for Project Coordinators and Partners.*

4.1.3 Participation of candidate countries

At the level of the Framework programme, following a disappointing initial response, QoL was involved in two specific calls dedicated to NAS during 2001, one for adding extra partners from NAS to running projects, and the other to integrate NAS into Centres of Excellence; each of them having a budget of 10m euro. A significant number of requests for information have been received, so that an improved level of participation is expected. One hundred and seventeen proposals for QoL/Growth/EESD-2001-INTEGR (Centres of Excellence) have now been evaluated, of which 60 have been ranked, passing the '4' threshold for science and technology. Regarding NAS-2002-NAS (the extension of existing projects) about 180 proposals have been received, and evaluations are in progress at the time of writing. Due to the strong difference at several levels among candidate countries, a very unequal participation is expected.

4.1.4 Participation of SMEs

Overall funding levels targeted by the Council, of 10%, have been satisfactorily met within QoL. However, there was a long "learning period" following the introduction of CRAFT projects (23 in 1999 to 170 in 2001, both with approved levels of involvement, of about 48%). Attention should be given to minimising such learning periods in the next Framework Programme. The vast majority of the CRAFT and EXAW (exploratory awards) proposals were submitted to KA1 and KA5, revealing strong differences in the perceived relevance of such projects among the Actions.

Otherwise, involvement of industrial partners overall (18% of participants) is regarded as very good in QoL, with penetration of projects (projects with at least one industrial partner) ranging from about 31% in "Environment and Health" (KA4) to over 80% in the more

commercially oriented "Cell Factory" (KA3). SME involvement in different countries, however, varies greatly, and is disappointingly small in some Member States.

Overall, the participation of SMEs in QoL was therefore considered to be very good, although lack of impact studies make it impossible to measure the improvements achieved through SME participation, and how effectively the results of the projects have been exploited.

There is quite a number of Economic and Technological Intelligence activities and Accompanying Measures to stimulate the participation of SMEs in the QoL Programme - mainly in CRAFT. In these projects, precise numbers of eligible proposals for Exploratory Awards and CRAFT projects are in the contracts. This should make it easy to forecast the necessary budget to support these activities. However, this was not considered. This led to a situation, where, for the last deadline, there were more than 200 CRAFT proposals and only some EUR 20 Mio left, with a high degree of frustration of SMEs and negative consequences for future participation.

Attention should also be given within QoL, and more broadly, to the substantial differences in SME involvement between countries, mainly resulting from different levels of availability of National advice and support e.g. via National Contact Points, and from the various degrees of traditional involvement and cooperation between research centres and research institutions.

4.1.5 Gender and Science

The studies that have been undertaken have clearly indicated the areas where gender balance appears to be satisfactory, and where improvements should be made. This can be extensively consulted in the "Gender and Research" publication resulting from these studies. The surveys of the current situation have been very informative, and the QoL programme has made an effort to increase participation at different levels, including some positive actions (e.g. increasing the percentage of female evaluators and members of EAGs). Further plans for action are less well defined, also taking into account that specific gender-targeted calls (e.g. such as research bursaries for women) could be more difficult.

Considering the low recruitment potential of women, the present involvement of women in the HLEG (High Level Expert Group; I-30%; II-38%) is quite satisfactory, although unequal among the different Actions; the representation in KA5 has improved (11% in 1999-2000 to 20% in 2001), but still needs to be further analysed and corrected. The representation of women in the PC is also low. It is expected that the existing patterns of horizontal and vertical segregation will diminish with time, as the QoL programme is also making satisfactory efforts in that direction. Since the low number of women in databases is one of the main constraints, one of the first goals should be to raise the recruitment potential of women by encouraging them to apply for inclusion in the EC databases. The participation and leading roles of women in projects, and the consideration of gender issues within projects, where appropriate, should also be fostered. The EC should attempt to influence the national approaches of Member States to achieve a more equal gender involvement in science. Again, for that to be effectively pursued, data on gender have to be collected.

In the Self Assessment document it is reported that attention has been paid in the Commission proposal for the next FP programme, in Area 1.1.1 Genomics and Biotechnology for Health, through a specific sentence: "gender equity in research will be ensured" and footnote: "Causes, clinical manifestations, consequences and treatment of diseases and disorders often differ between women and men---." This is a positive issue if appropriately followed up.

One important constraint on the analysis of the position of women in EC research actions is the lack of systematic collection of gender data, especially in relation to project participants. *Ideally one would wish to have full gender data from proposers and collaborators in their project proposals. This could be done very simply, without undue complication for the applicants, and add highly relevant information that will help to guide future action.*

4.1.6 Towards the new FP: state of play.

The Commission's policy paper on "Life Sciences and Biotechnology: a Strategic Vision" will be especially influential for QoL programme development. QoL will provide the major reaction to the recently launched Commission initiative targeting the alleviation of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis in the third world, and take a major role in the establishment of the European Clinical Trials Platform (ECTP). Progress with ECTP has been very encouraging, with most Member States already involved in establishing/agreeing the underlying principles.

The establishment of "Centres of Excellence" is a new, potentially valuable methodological approach, but absolute definition of "excellence" is still insufficiently defined. Excellence is differently appreciated in different countries, and this should be taken into account in encouraging wider involvement.

Some of the concerns presented by the panel for the 2001 exercise seem to have been already taken into account for FP6, such as the proposed change in the means for selection of evaluators, the plan to have a two stage proposal submission procedure, or the promised access to databases during the evaluation sessions (see the January minutes of the FP). Not so good perspectives are envisaged for the impact studies of the projects or for the coordination between national research policies and the FP6.

An important objective of FP6, to reduce the number of projects and concentrate them in bigger and stronger projects, seems sound, however some concerns about the large projects arise:

Large projects will need stronger coordination and management structures, moreover large numbers of collaborators may go beyond what is optimum. Scientists involved in coordinating projects are rarely professional managers, so that they will have to be assisted by project managers. This will require additional and specific financing. Also, it is not specially convincing that larger integrated projects, as envisioned for the next Framework Programme, will necessarily lead to more effective delivery of results, at least for the more basic types of research, than hitherto (see comments on the "Impact Assessment of Biomed2, mentioned in 4.1.1, above).

There is concern about the growing complexity of rules and guidelines likely in Framework 6 (see "Rules and Guidelines, under 4.2.1, below). From the time-course analysis of the FP5, long lag periods seem to exist for most Actions. It is desirable to reduce such lag periods for the FP6, particularly because it can be envisaged that the two-stage proposal submission system, and the movement towards larger projects, will create additional difficulties for the elaboration of well coordinated proposals. Measures to shorten these lag periods should be implemented in anticipation to the launch of FP6; all the researchers should be aware well in advance of the new directions of FP6. It is recommended to give wide diffusion to all the new aspects of the FP6, as early as possible. Another concern is about researchers investing too much time in administrative, bureaucratic, and dissemination tasks, for which they are not the best individuals, in detriment to the time devoted to their expertise tasks in research itself. Also, the increasing complexity of procedures is likely to further inhibit the desired greater involvement of SMEs.

4.2 MANAGEMENT AND PROCESSES

4.2.1 Main management issues

Organisational

In the frame of the re-organisation of the Commission, there have been many staff changes, including one of the Directors, and vacancies, which may have created difficulties with the

efficacy of project management. However, project management, and transfer of projects between scientific officers, has been facilitated by the development of an intranet, covering project management, in at least one Key Action. *This approach could usefully be extended to other Actions, as could the increased use of external consultants or PTAs.*

It remains evident that the distribution of funding between policy-related Key Actions and science area-related Generic Activities continues to work well in matching resources to requirements in QoL.

In general, the work and advice from the EAGs was appreciated very much in most Actions, especially in the identification of new and emerging issues that needed to be addressed.

Proposal success rates

Proposal success rates vary from about 26% (GAs) to as low as 13.6% (KA1). The latter rate is uncomfortably low considering the substantial commitments of time and effort by proposers. Consideration should be given to the implementation of a system to discourage the submission of applications that have very little chance of success. A possibility could be, with respect to two-step selection, applicants might routinely submit a 1-2 page summary of their proposals for (postal?) review by panels, and for pre-selection prior to submission of a full proposal.

Resubmission rates, at over 50%, remain high, and with a relatively small increase in chance of success in most Actions (overall about 16.5% for first submissions, and 21% for resubmissions). Such results disappoint many applicants and, more widely, give rise to a poor impression of the potential for QoL support. Perhaps more attention should be given to the encouragement to proposers to resubmit? Could more projects be accepted with revision, rather than rejected? Could the detailed comments of evaluators (full “peer review”), instead of the ESR summary be sent to the proposers of failed applications?

It remains a problem that some projects are regularly approved but not financed, due to lack of funds. Such over-subscription is a recurrent problem for which there is no obvious easy solution. On the one hand, the budget approved by the Council and the Parliament is limited. On the other hand, it is not possible to directly restrict the numbers of proposals that are submitted.

Still tighter definition of requirements within some calls may be desirable, in order to further limit the range of topics that are acceptable.

Programme committees

There remains some confusion regarding the responsibilities and the tasks of Programme Committee members (and see the next two comments, below). Some Programme Committee members confuse their responsibilities with those of the EAGs. *This issue could usefully be discussed at the general level, and more clearly agreed within EAGs and PCs. Maybe there should be stronger, formal links between the two?*

Some PC members emphasise that the PC should have a role in monitoring the progress and impacts of the previous programme. However, the current PC has no remit over the previous, or next programme. The resulting lack of continuity means that judgements and decisions regarding the work programme cannot be made as effectively as they should be.

In the past, successful workshops on particular project areas have been presented to a subgroup of the PC, but this has not happened in QoL. *Better awareness and involvement could be promoted by ensuring that PC members are regularly invited to relevant workshops.*

PC members have requested policy-related results (to which they are entitled under Article 19.3 in the Rules of Participation). This has not happened, and no relevant mechanism seems to exist. There are difficulties in other programmes, but the Environment programme has a mechanism in place.

Evaluations

In general, QoL took a number of methodological experimental initiatives, such as sending out projects for evaluation for some limited, but important areas; making good use of two-step selection; and including “calls for expressions of interest.” *In our opinion these initiatives, although to some extent time-consuming, are very valuable means for improving relevance and comprehensiveness of key elements of Actions, and should be encouraged and pursued more widely.*

There is a wide agreement that people who apply to be evaluators are not necessarily always the best evaluators. The use of a large database of names, qualifications etc is invaluable, but should not solely contain the names of scientists who have applied to be evaluators. *Some sort of more positive invitation, or at least, invitation to apply, would be worth considering, in order to attract the best possible evaluators. The Commission could consider using the considerable knowledge and contacts within key Scientific Societies, or Journal editors, to help to identify effective evaluators, and the deliberate selection of former (effective) Project Coordinators.*

Some evaluators regularly express concern when confronted with proposals for which their expertise is peripheral. They often ask why they cannot be given some pre-indication of the nature of the projects they will be asked to assess. *While appreciating the problems of confidentiality, we believe that it would be worth re-evaluating the possibility of sending, at least Part B or, if that is logistically impossible, summaries of proposals to evaluators prior to the evaluation sessions.*

We hope that the reiterated request to make available Medline more widely to evaluators, on-line will be acted on.

Ethics

Ethical compliance is especially important in QoL, so there is an agreed framework within which to operate; action to raise awareness among project proposers (some (non-medical) project proposers are still not persuasively aware of ethical issues); a routine for positive ethical assessment; support of research in bioethics (18 projects funded at the present time, and 5 under negotiation, with Socio-economics), and support of Conferences. Project proposers are expected to explain how ethical requirements will be fulfilled, and evaluators are requested to comment in their appraisals. This latter request is of arguable value, since most evaluators will not be well informed in any depth about ethical issues. However, satisfactorily serious ethical review of any proposals in which ethical issues are “suspect” is undertaken by an international panel of true experts. Altogether, socio-economic and ethical issues are planned to be more prominent in FP6, so that these actions are opportune and welcome.

Workshops

Organisation of Workshops and Conferences are seen as important and widely praised functions, following advice from EAGs, Programme Committees, the Life Sciences High Level Group, and sometimes Coordinators and members of projects. Some Actions would like to sponsor more, but relatively few can be pursued because of limited staff. (For example, the EAG for KA2 had identified 11 topics, of which only 5 could be realistically pursued). *If staff limitations allow, higher prioritisation of workshops would usefully aid programme development, and dissemination of information.*

Rules and guidelines

Commission rules and guidelines for applications, as well as for managing and reporting project results, including administration, have become steadily more complex over the years, at each step for seemingly good reasons. However, there is now a general impression (e.g. from applicants, contractors, and also from many staff) that the complexity has increased so much as to be counterproductive. *A study to identify realistic means for simplification would be opportune, certainly within QoL, and probably at the level of the whole Commission's Research support activities.*

4.2.2 Communication and information dissemination

The TIP (Technological Implementation Plan) was developed with a view to the use and dissemination of knowledge in the interest of the Community, to show the potential of the results of every project, and to facilitate the future use and exploitation of projects' results. Non-confidential data are extracted at regular intervals from the database in a format that is suitable for publication on the CORDIS RESULTS database. Information for the year 2001 for QoL is expected.

Socio-economic aspects, particularly regarding the increasingly important public perception/understanding of some QoL areas, have been given increased priority, with the launch of a "Biosociety" website and calls for interest on a range of public interest issues, which it is increasingly important to address. Further useful actions could be undertaken. For instance, a convention of EU-supported investigators could assemble annually from different fields, and include EU officials, SME representatives, consumers etc.

The Commission's own publications regarding strategic studies, research activities underway, and successes of past projects etc, are numerous and well presented. However, interaction with the European, and international (see 4.1.2) scientific communities could be usefully more "visible," e.g. via "editorials" and more "position papers" by Commission members or experts on their behalf (though there are some impressive examples of this being done). The position of the Commission on important research topics or general issues is not usually communicated forcefully at the international scientific level, e.g. in the major scientific journals that carry editorial comments and cater for relevant topics.

Overall, the methodology for communication of research results and policies at a European and at an international level should be carefully reconsidered and exploited. In particular, it should be considered to send material regularly to Scientific Societies, for reproduction in their journals or newsletters, many of which reach thousands of individual members, or for other means of dissemination, e.g. at their local or national meetings.

4.2.3 Monitoring Methodology

The new structure of the monitoring exercise, and the interactions between the FP panel and our SP panel were effective. Our meetings with Commission staff were informative and usefully characterised by completely open discussion.

While some of the documents we were given were useful, there was a degree of "document overload." More careful and critical selection would help monitors in the future. In particular it is desired that the statistics be presented in a consistent manner. Tables should be better labelled, self-explanatory, and easily readable. This is probably a symptom of inadequate general informatics technology.

The internal self-assessment document was particularly valuable, as long as suitably updated.

4.2.4 Follow-up on impact of previous research FPs and SPs

Access to information on follow up of the impact of previous research programmes has not been easy, although several efforts have been made to evaluate the outcomes of these programs in books, other publications, meetings, e.g. the presentation of FP3, FP4 and FP5 Projects on Food and Health at a recent EU-supported conference.

The suggested greater use of electronic dissemination is being implemented (see the Technology Implementation Plan), but can be further improved.

Few resources and time seems to have been devoted to the follow-up on impact of previous research FPs and SPs, and no systematic approach has been taken to follow the impact of previous research SPs, but a range of dispersed measures. An accompanying measure has been submitted to the October 2001 deadline proposing to carry out an impact assessment of all 240 projects in the agriculture area of the FAIR Programme (1994-1998) and it has been retained for funding. An accompanying measure contract has been passed to carry out to assess the impact of agro-industrial projects of the AIR programme (1991-1994); it is to be finalised by April 2002.

4.2.5 Other relevant aspects

The general use of the large number of acronyms in all the information provided constitutes a continuous uncomfortable problem. The proposers, evaluators, expert groups, etc. spend a lot of time remembering the significance of the acronyms and also the real meaning of the terms. A list of these acronyms indicating the complete words and also a very brief explanation of the real meaning should accompany all the information provided by the Commission.

The limiting factor for many of the recommended improvements seems to be the lack of information. Sometimes collecting more data is required; however too frequently it is not the lack of data, but the lack of availability of the data in a adequate way, or the problems of data not being presented in a understandable, yet synthetic, way. Each KA has produced a different system to present the data, creating an unnecessary multiplication of the efforts, and making comparisons among them or global analyses very difficult. The improvement on data presentation, and a centralization and homogenization of data collection is needed.

4.3 *IMPACT OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH FPS AND SPS*

See point 4.2.4. It is difficult to evaluate the impact of previous research FPs and SPs, since no systematic studies of follow up were available to the Panel.

4.4 *FOLLOW UP OF 2000 MONITORING AND FIVE YEAR ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS*

The 2000 Monitoring Panel concentrated on recommendations regarding the ERA and the development of the next Framework Programme. These, mostly general, recommendations have been taken into account in QoL activities and programme development.

More direct reactions have been made to more specific recommendations. These have included:

- the establishment of a new return programme for young and senior scientists working outside their own country, which is being addressed for the next Framework Programme;
- calls for interest for cluster topics within given action lines;
- modification to evaluation procedures for clusters, some of which were already acted on (in Genome Research for Human Health, in Nov 2000);

- the roles and tasks of SOs has been partially accomplished; there have been suggestions for reducing their workload, including the following action re. PTAs. Recruitment of PTAs, is being addressed slowly, and still only implemented substantially in some cases, such as in Genomics and Human Health.

- the achievement of a complete harmonisation of the ratios requires the prediction of the number of proposals received for each call and it has had a limited success. The recruitment of evaluators is made well in advance the exact number of proposals to be evaluated is known. However, the problem is minimised by the reviewing of each proposal for at least four experts. The submissions sometimes exceed forecast.

The Five Year Assessment Report on the Specific Programme Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources produced a wide spectrum of suggestions and recommendations for FP6 and future FPs, so that answering to them one by one would be very extensive; for the same reason it is no feasible to analyse one by one the Commission responses to the recommendations and a global analysis has been made. The recommendations mainly relate to a number of general aspects, which could not be taken into account at the level of the Programme, which is at next to last year of execution.

The Panel is satisfied to verify that most of the recommendations have been taken into account for the FP6, such as that for “a long-term consideration of the future of the European Research system” or that on “EUROEXCELLENCE networking” which constitute the innovative basis of the forthcoming FP6. Another point, which is under consideration for FP6, is to allow more rapid movement into new or emerging areas of science, as also stressed by the present report. Also, some of the recommendations are coincident with those of the 2000 Monitoring Panel and have already been commented. other suggestions involve actions which are to be taken also by the member states, such as the coordination of the research activities between the Commission and the member states, and the Commission makes efforts to influence them.

The Panel concentrates also in commenting other recommendations which have been harder to pursue, such as the difficulties observed with the databases and its use for the different customers (the Commission itself, the SO, the Monitoring Panels, the researchers, etc); the Panel appreciates the very strong and good efforts taken in some areas, but no clear move towards an overall action has been done, this would solve the problem and save a lot of time to the individual areas pursuing this tasks by themselves. The main recommendation, which has been also suggested to the Panel by many of those interviewed during the exercise, is the simplification of procedures. In spite of the Commission efforts, there is still a long way to go in this direction; for any improvement proposed, the benefits and the increase in the complexity involved should be carefully outweighed.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel concludes that management of the QoL programme during 2001 has been efficient. The level of commitment of staff, with very heavy workloads, has been impressive. Actions taken were in accord with guidelines for FP5, and suitable reactions were made to points raised by the 2000 Monitoring Panel. Sound support has been given for the establishment of ERA, and for the newly-emerging 6th Framework Programme.

Specific recommendations of the Panel are highlighted in italics in the Report, and summarised below:

*More accurate prediction/assessment of projects' final outputs and outcomes

- *Improvement of support for Demonstration-type projects
- *Initiatives to improve “pre-emptivity”
- *Establishment of some sort of “patenting advice and encouragement” system
- *Actions to improve SME involvement in some countries
- *Acquisition of full gender data from project proposers and collaborators
- *Wider use of intranets to aid project management
- *Clarification of PC roles, and of PC:EAG interface
- *More use of two-step selection, and “calls for expressions of interest”
- *Improved means for the selection of project evaluators, including the use of Scientific Societies to advise
- *Consideration, once again, of the possibility of sending at least project summaries to evaluators before the evaluation sessions
- *Support for more Workshops (staff time permitting!)
- *Improvement of information flow through the involvement of Scientific Societies, their Newsletters, and Journals where appropriate
- *Substantial simplification of all procedures involved in management of the Programme.

PART B:

**Responses of the Programme Management to the
external Monitoring Report**

2001 QUALITY OF LIFE MONITORING EXPERT GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS COMMISSION SERVICES' RESPONSE

Expert Group recommendation	Commission Services' Response	Services' Commitment (if any)
<p>*More accurate prediction/assessment of projects' final outputs and outcomes</p>	<p>The Quality of Life Programme (QoL) is conscious that impact assessment is essential. As mentioned in the report the QoL programme has undertaken several initiatives to better assess the results and the impact of the projects. Impact studies on the 4th Framework Programme outcomes have been performed, a dedicated database has been created to improve the exploitation of the Technology Implementation Plans (TIP) and mid-term reviews of the projects have been carried out since last year. In this respect, more and more importance is given to the TIP as a means to follow-up the use and dissemination of project results. For that reason, a common database has been created at the level of the Framework Programme and the TIPs are going to be submitted electronically via Cordis. Nevertheless, it will be the Programmes' responsibility to make use of the data collected. The QoL programme is considering performing an impact study, in due time (2003-2004), using the TIPs collected at the end of the current FP5 projects.</p>	<p>The QoL programme is considering performing an impact study, in due time (2003-2004), using the TIPs collected at the end of the current FP5 projects.</p>
<p>*Improvement of support for Demonstration-type projects</p>	<p>In the 6th Framework Programme, integrated projects may also contain a component of demonstration activities designed to prove the viability of new technologies which offer a potential economic advantage, but which cannot be commercialised directly (e.g. testing of product-like prototypes). In addition, calls for « targeted research projects » will be available and it is foreseen that the evaluation criteria for these calls can be specifically adapted, for instance to support the competitiveness of SMEs.</p>	<p>FP6 (as soon as early 2003)</p>

2001 QUALITY OF LIFE MONITORING EXPERT GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS COMMISSION SERVICES' RESPONSE

Expert Group recommendation	Commission Services' Response	Services' Commitment (if any)
<p><i>*Initiatives to improve "pre-emptivity"</i></p>	<p>The panel estimates that "reaction to new problems arising during the period analysed has been efficient" However, they ask for "quicker more pre-emptive approaches to new problems (e.g. TSEs; bioterrorism)" and they suggest that pre-emptivity be a standing item on the agenda of the Experts Advisory Groups (EAG). As a matter of fact, the EAGs regularly took on board arising problems and they always judiciously advised the Commission. The panel's recommendation should be discussed with the management committees and the advisory groups associated with the relevant themes in 6th Framework Programme. It is worth noting that the structure of the 6th Framework Programme and the new instruments will provide more flexibility in reacting to and anticipating problems.</p>	<p>On going activities with the Life Sciences high level group.</p> <p>FP6</p>
<p><i>*Establishment of some sort of "patenting advice and encouragement" system</i></p>	<p>The QoL programme will finance a specific accompanying measure that will create intellectual property guidelines specifically for projects from the biotechnology sector and the life sciences. In addition, central guidelines for « consortium agreements » will be made available to 6th Framework Programme projects. The « IPR Help-Desk », which has been established under new management in January 2001 is also supposed to provide information and help to 5th and 6th Framework Programme contractors.</p>	<p>On going activities with the « IPR Help-Desk »</p> <p>FP6</p>
<p><i>*Actions to improve SME involvement in some countries</i></p>	<p>In the 6th Framework Programme, the CRAFT scheme will be administered centrally and not under the control of the directorates managing the thematic priorities. However, the Economic and Technological Intelligence schemes will need to re-focus also on participation of SMEs in non-CRAFT schemes. In addition, future NCPs have to be more closely integrated into the ETI schemes and the promoting activities of the programme management.</p>	<p>.</p>

**2001 QUALITY OF LIFE MONITORING EXPERT GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS
COMMISSION SERVICES' RESPONSE**

Expert Group recommendation	Commission Services' Response	Services' Commitment (if any)
<i>*Acquisition of full gender data from project proposers and collaborators</i>	In the working groups preparing the implementation of the 6 th Framework Programme, (in particular, defining standard documentation) the gender issue is being carefully considered. In particular: the gender of all persons named in all documentation arising from the 6 th Framework Programme must be specified and recorded in the new informatics system for the Programme.	
<i>*Wider use of intranets to aid project management</i>	Operational units have to deal with staff changes and vacancies, which may create difficulties in project management. To enhance efficiency in the management, the panel suggests a wider use of Intranet. As this suggestion is based on existing experiments within the QoL Programme, the different services will be invited to exchange experiences.	Exchange of experiences could start this year
<i>*Clarification of PC roles, and of PC:EAG interface</i>	Experts Advisory Groups (EAG) and Programme Committees (PC) are quite distinct and well defined (Council Decision 1999/167/EC and OJ C183/23 of 13.06.1998). The purpose of the EAGs is to advise the Commission, whereas PCs have a formal role set out in the Council decisions adopting the specific programmes. PCs are required to be consulted by the Commission before taking certain decisions, notably in the approval of the work-programme and its subsequent updates. Evidently, the work of the EAGs is of interest to the PCs and they are informed of the EAGs' deliberations.	
<i>*More use of two-step selection, and "calls for expressions of interest"</i>	The panel praised the QoL Programme's initiatives for improving the evaluation of projects and strongly support "calls for expression of interests". This new approach is being implemented in the context of the European Research Area and the new Framework Programme.	Call EOI.FP6.2002 (OJ 2002/C 71/06) "Invitation to submit expressions of interest An opportunity for Europe's research community to help prepare for the first calls of FP6"

2001 QUALITY OF LIFE MONITORING EXPERT GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS COMMISSION SERVICES' RESPONSE

Expert Group recommendation	Commission Services' Response	Services' Commitment (if any)
<p><i>*Improved means for the selection of project evaluators, including the use of Scientific Societies to advise</i></p>	<p>Project evaluators are currently recruited among volunteers who previously answered to a dedicated call for applications. The proposers deserve that the best experts evaluate their projects. Up to now, the Commission staff's experience and qualification has guaranteed the impartiality and the competency of the evaluators selected. Nevertheless, the monitoring experts are sceptical about the use of a large database and ask for some sort of "more positive invitation". It is stated that in the 6th Framework Programme the independent experts appointed by the Commission shall be very high-ranking individuals with significant experience in the relevant domains. To this end, it is envisaged among other possibilities to rely on calls addressed to research institutions with a view to establishing lists of suitable candidates.</p>	<p>FP6</p>
<p><i>*Consideration, once again, of the possibility of sending at least project summaries to evaluators before the evaluation sessions</i></p>	<p>In order to make the evaluation process more cost-effective and to save time for the evaluators, a pre-evaluation of the proposals, at a distance, has been recurrently suggested. For reasons of confidentiality, the Commission has always rejected the idea when anonymity was required. However, the rules are being reconsidered in the 6th Framework Programme. The system may possibly be strengthened through the more systematic use of remote assessment prior to panel meetings, as well as through hearings of applicants by the panel, in particular to allow the applicants to answer questions not covered by the proposal itself.</p>	<p>FP6</p>
<p><i>*Support for more Workshops (staff time permitting!)</i></p>	<p>The QoL Programme sees as important the organisation of workshops and conferences and welcomes the panel's support in this matter. Efforts will continue as far as possible.</p>	

**2001 QUALITY OF LIFE MONITORING EXPERT GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS
COMMISSION SERVICES' RESPONSE**

Expert Group recommendation	Commission Services' Response	Services' Commitment (if any)
<p><i>*Improvement of information flow through the involvement of Scientific Societies, their Newsletters, and Journals where appropriate</i></p>	<p>We recognise the need to improve the information flow, especially on projects currently funded, and the programme management will ensure that appropriate resources will be allocated.</p>	
<p><i>*Substantial simplification of all procedures involved in management of the Programme.</i></p>	<p>The Commission procedures are standard. Consequently, if any study to identify means for simplification of procedure has to be carried out, it should be at least at the level of the Framework Programme</p>	