

international level; and, introduction of a simple, effective and inexpensive European Community patent.

The French EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2000 had fewer specific achievements, especially in light of the fact that Council approval for the next phase of the Galileo programme has been postponed to April 2001.

The Swedish EU Council Presidency in the first half of 2001 is committed to maintaining European Research Area momentum, and to helping reach a consensus on issues expected for the Union in the first half of 2001.

The second half of 2001 will be under the Belgian EU Council Presidency.

The European Commission

At the level of the European Union, the European Commission is the guardian of the Treaties. It has the sole right of initiative in the field of European Union legislation. It is also the European Union's executive body.

The Research Directorate-General, with about 1,300 staff, manages the overall implementation of the Fifth Framework Programme (1998-2002) known as FP5, with a budget close to 15 billion euro. and is driving development of policies and consultations concerning the European Research Area (ERA) and the guidelines for the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006). Director General Achillos Mitsos, who was appointed a few months ago, has announced an important reorganisation of the DG Research which creates four new directorates named after ERA themes: Coordination of Community Action (framework programmes, research and SMEs, policies and horizontal issues); Structural Aspects (national research policies/benchmarking, centres and networks of excellence, research and innovation, research infrastructures, COST); Science and Society (governance issues, scientific advice structures, ethical issues, youth and women); and the Human Factor (mobility policies, fellowships, training networks). The INCO Directorate is replaced by two international scientific cooperation units, for policy and projects, both reporting to Deputy Director General Hendrick Tent. Other directorates are for FP5 implementation. There is also a Directorate for Prospective and Socio-Economic Research.

The Joint Research Centre (JRC), which employs about 2,500 staff under different schemes and has a budget of about 300 million euro a year, carries out research and provides technical know-how in support of European Union policies. The research effort at the JRC is customer-driven, and most projects are formulated and carried out in close collaboration with Member State organisations -- either through research networks, joint projects or staff exchanges. Work at the JRC mainly concentrates on four key areas of public concern in terms of security, safety, trust and confidence: 1) safety of food and chemicals; 2) environment; 3) a dependable information society; and, 4) safety and security of nuclear energy. Current priorities include validation of methods for the detection of GMOs in food and of BSE in meat; research on the behaviour of