

From Cooperation through Coordination to Integration

***From Spinelli to Busquin:
Research Policy of the European Union in Perspective***

by Peter A. Schregardus & Gerard J. Telkamp

Study commissioned by the Netherlands Ministry of
Education, Culture and Science from

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Project Manager: Professor Alfred van Staden

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TO THE READERS OF THIS REPORT

It is with great pleasure and satisfaction, and with some regrets for unavoidable delays, that we hereby present an authorized English-language translation of Table of Contents, Preface, Introduction, two key chapters, Summary and Conclusions of our December 2001 Dutch-language study on the European Union's policy of scientific research & technological development in historical perspective and the prospects of a European Research Area (ERA). We have added the covering letter of the Netherlands' Minister of Education, Culture and Science Loek Hermans to European Commissioner for Science, Research & Development Philippe Busquin (accompanying presentation of the report).

Since March 2002 we are conducting, on behalf of the Clingendael Institute, research for a second project in the field of European research policy, again a commissioned study for the Netherlands Ministry of Science, Culture and Education. It concerns pros and cons of the creation of a European Agency, Fund or Council for scientific research. (See Supplement to this report for a short project description, previously published in the *Clingendael Newsletter*, Issue 10, Summer 2002).

We would like to invite all readers of our Spinelli-Busquin report and anyone interested in the outcome of our current consultancy study to submit his or her comments and opinions, both as regards the European Research Area and a future European Research Council, to:

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PREFACE

In May 2001, the ongoing discussion on the January 2000 proposals by European Commissioner Philippe Busquin concerning the creation of a European Research Area (ERA) prompted the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to approach the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' in The Hague (the Clingendael Institute) with a request to carry out a study to evaluate the policy on participation in European research programmes. The study was to include a historical and comparative analysis of the proposals of the Commission of the European Communities/the European Union in 1972/74 and in 2000/2001 with respect to the creation of a research area with a European dimension, including the response to such proposals in the Council of Ministers.

In June 2001, the Clingendael Institute was commissioned by the Ministry to embark on this study. The editors of the Institute's monthly review *Internationale Spectator* - the international lawyer Peter A. Schregardus and the historian Gerard J. Telkamp - undertook the task of writing the research report. Project coordinator was Alfred van Staden, director of the Institute, editor-in-chief of its monthly review and professor of political science at the University of Leiden. Pim Fenger, Deputy Head of the Department of General and Policy Affairs at the Directorate of Research and Science Policy, supervised the study on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

The point of departure of the study was to be the motives of the European Commission, and in particular Commissioner Altiero Spinelli, in putting forward proposals for a common European research policy, the reasons why the national governments at the time did not accept them, and how lessons could be learned from that failure when evaluating the chances of success of current similar proposals in the same field.

The two authors of this study thus began their inquiry into the policy on scientific research and technological development in the European Union in a historical perspective, with a focus on two questions:

- * In what way did the Spinelli proposals in the first half of the 1970s break new ground; which elements were accepted or rejected, and why?
- * Are there analogous elements in the Busquin proposals for a European Research Area (ERA), and in what way might his ideas have a better chance of being realised?

The authors completed the preliminary phase of their research with the conclusion that in order to find relevant answers, it would be necessary first and foremost to compile a concise and balanced overview of the outlines of European Union research policy as proposed by a series of Commissioners over time, from Spinelli/Dahrendorf through Davignon, Ruberti and Cresson, to Busquin. Special attention would be given to research policy concepts or instruments such as centres of excellence and integrated projects.

After several months it became clear to the project staff that for a number of conceptual and practical reasons the study would have to be refocused somewhat in an attempt to present a broad longitudinal outline and a selective historical perspective of European Union research policy, which would offer ample scope for both a comparative approach and comments on current policy.

The motivations for compiling a broad outline survey and what was by definition a somewhat superficial long-term view of EU (scientific) Research and Technological Development (RTD) policy were on the one hand the desire, or rather the necessity, felt by both authors to bring some sense of order to the terminological confusion and recycling of policy concepts over at least three decades of European RTD policy, and on the other a set of practical considerations, in particular the lack of archive material and the time-consuming nature of in-depth research. However, the deciding factor in the preference for a more general approach was the growing realisation that however well-meant the federalist Altiero Spinelli's proposals for a common European research policy may have been, his communitarian concepts represented a typical top-down approach and cannot be considered to prefigure the bottom-up ideals embodied in Busquin's recent ERA concept.

In the end, therefore, the study combined a number of historical snapshots and policy comments. The authors, who at the start of their study were strangers to the inner workings of EU RTD policy, had to fight their way through a tangled confusion of concepts and policy cycles, from European Scientific Area through European Technological Community to European Research Area, and also through the still loosely defined and purportedly new concepts of networks and/or centres of excellence and integrated projects. They jumped aboard a moving train called ERA, which was a slow train with many stations with names such as regional or cohesion policy, ethical aspects, mobility, the role of women, science awareness, etcetera; but increasingly it was also a *Train à Grande Vitesse*, for example at the time of the Belgian Presidency when, under the Belgian federal system of rotation of European responsibilities, the Research

Councils were presided over by the president of the Brussels Capital Region, François-Xavier De Donnea.

It may have become clear by now to the reader of this Preface that the present study has a primarily exploratory and tentative character. Its policy recommendations are presented in the guise of modest comments and more or less personal observations and considerations on the part of the authors.

One conclusion is that there is ample scope for further research into the specific role of personalities and institutions in the history of the *grandeur et misère* of European Union scientific research and technological development policy. Prospective research could focus on the specific role of intermediate actors in the field of European research policy, in particular the Research Councils and funding agencies, the national academies and similar organisations and, more specifically, the European umbrella organisations such as ESF, EUROHORCS, ALLEA, etc.

The final text of the original Dutch-language report was completed on 19 December 2001

This English-language rendition of its Preface, Introduction, main chapters and conclusions was finalised in June 2002.

INTRODUCTION

This study of the proposals for a European Research Area deals with unconventional, pioneering types of cooperation in the fields of European scientific research and technological development. Partners in such cooperative ventures are often erstwhile competitors. One recent example is the Dutch Polymer Institute (DPI), which was established in 1997 as one of four technological top-level institutes created with the assistance of the Dutch government as a strategic alliance between academia and private industry. The DPI community reflects the cooperation between non-profit and profit-driven sectors for the benefit of knowledge development. Within a few years other European, American and Asian universities and companies have joined the consortium.

When the European Commissioner for Research, Philippe Busquin, visited the Eindhoven headquarters of DPI early in 2001, he acknowledged DPI as potentially a prime example of a Centre of Excellence, one of the key concepts of the European Research Area, or ERA - the acronym Busquin had introduced a year before, on 18 January 2000. This study deals primarily with historical and current aspects of the ERA.

The Communication of the Commission of the European Union *Towards a European Research Area* was the clarion call of Philippe Busquin, Belgian Commissioner for Research in the new European Commission which had taken office only a few months before under the presidency of Romano Prodi. The ERA policy memorandum, which was initially presented as a policy discussion paper, was soon to receive the largely enthusiastic support of all interested parties in the field of science and research policy, as well as of the institutional partners in the European Union. During the ensuing months it was to become increasingly interwoven with the preparations for, design of and decision-making with respect to the Sixth European Framework Programme 2002-2006 in the field of Research and Technological Development. Moreover, the ERA document may be considered one of the main building blocks of the Lisbon Declaration of March 2000, which promulgated the goal of ensuring that Europe achieved the status of the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world within a timespan of a decade or so.

Two main motives figured in the justification for establishing and institutionalising a European Research Area. Both were born of urgent necessities, painful conclusions and long-standing deficiencies. One motive was

external and referred to the ever-widening gap between Europe (the EU) and the United States and Japan in the RTD fields. The other motive was internal and was based on the view that, despite decades of relevant European policy and investments in European research cooperation and many attempts at coordination, the European scientific landscape still presented a picture of fragmentation and overlap.

Such complaints were by no means new; a variety of remedies had been proposed or tried in previous decades of European research policy. However, Busquin's initiative was innovative in its comprehensiveness and fresh methods of seeking to induce higher levels of cooperation, hopefully leading to a higher degree of integration of European research. National centres of excellence would be connected in transnational networks of virtual centres of excellence. Integrated projects would be a stepping stone to integrated programmes. New horizons were broadened to offer the possibility of the mutual opening up of national research programmes.

The design of the ERA also provided a politically expedient container concept. A host of useful and respectable concrete or intangible objectives were included, ranging from the facilitation of mobility of researchers, cohesion of the EU and promotion of participation of women in European research, to raising the profile of science, etcetera.

This study attempts to put the ERA in a proper historical perspective, and for that purpose it returns to the policy outlook of a generation ago, in the early 1970s. At that time a European research policy programme as such was still in its infancy. European research was also stigmatised by the failures of cooperation on nuclear energy research. On the other hand, concepts such as a European Scientific Area and centres of excellence were already being employed as indicators of a potentially truly European research landscape. The European Science Foundation (ESF) came about in 1974 with assistance from the EC.

A European Science Foundation had figured prominently in Altiero Spinelli's plans for coordination of European research. However, most of the supranational ambitions of the Italian federalist Spinelli, a Commissioner in the years 1970-1976, ran aground. His idea of a powerful or even omnipotent European Research and Development Agency (ERDA) had already run into fatal difficulties in preliminary consultations at pre-COREPER level. When he had to share his portfolio with Ralf Dahrendorf, the latter favoured a far more

pragmatic approach and stressed the potential advantages of dovetailing existing national research efforts.

For the time being, the question of whether it is an historically, intellectually, or conceptually fruitful or well-considered approach to compare Spinelli/Dahrendorf with Busquin must remain unanswered. A broad outline of the history of European Union research policy does however reveal that European research policy is almost permanently fraught with dilemmas and dichotomies: intergovernmental cooperation or a supranational, communautarian policy? Regionalism, exclusivist EU/European promotion of research or a globalist approach, i.e. research cooperation with third countries? Industry-driven research or fundamental science? Stressing excellence only or catering for the needs of less privileged regions under the cloak of social and economic cohesion? Large programmes for large industries or special attention for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)? And last but not least, can or should European research policy be a fertile ground for experiments with *géométrie variable*, *Europe à la carte*, flexibility, or other buzzwords referring to cores and coalitions within the European Union?

SUMMARY

ERA: from idea to policy

The policy proposal for a European Research Area (ERA) launched by EU Commissioner Philippe Busquin in January 2000 has a more or less diffuse past and variegated precedents, but it can be sure of a concrete future. The ERA proposal envisages a European research system of growing cooperation, through attempts at coordination via the successive European RTD Framework Programmes, and culminating in a new paradigm of enhanced integration of research and research policy.

Timing and historical perspective

The ERA proposal appears to have been put forward at the right time and in the right place. The new Prodi Commission had made an energetic start. The objectives of the EU Lisbon Summit in March 2000 with respect to a future dynamic and competitive knowledge-based European economy actually included the underlying concepts of the ERA. There was a definite sense of urgency related to real and perceived deficiencies of European research. The economic prospects looked positive.

Though the policy vocabularies seem to indicate conspicuous analogies, it is difficult to compare the EC/EU research policy outlooks of the early 1970s and 2000/2001 - because of the changes in institutional context, now that research policy since the Single European Act and the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam has been embedded in general EU policy objectives; because of the sheer size of EU research budgets, growing with each new RTD Framework Programme; and, on a practical level, because of the availability of advanced information and communication technology, something policymakers of a generation ago could only dream of.

However, the ideas, concepts and institutions put forward by the Commissioners Spinelli and Dahrendorf some thirty years ago were grafted onto roughly the same lines of policy, potentials and policy dilemmas that are once again posing a challenge to science, research and technology policymakers at European level: promotion of intergovernmental as well as Community policy options *plus* pragmatic support for initiatives of science and research organisations in transnational relationships and combinations. Yet it must be kept in mind that neither then - or at any other time in the past - nor today can European research actually be incorporated exclusively into one specific model or one line of policy.

Institutional preconditions

The European Commission, in the form of its Directorate-General for Research, will have to make great efforts in its inter-institutional dialogue within the EU (with the European Parliament, the European Council, etc.) and in its constructive engagement with national intermediary organisations (e.g. Research Councils, funding agencies) and their umbrella organisations at European level (e.g. ESF, ALLEA) in order to realise its ambition that the Sixth Framework Programme will incorporate the ERA and realise its full potential.

The conditions for achieving this are flexibility, energy, transparency, allowing for transitional periods and mechanisms, a smooth introduction of the rules for participation in the two new key instruments- networks of centres of excellence and integrated projects - and, in this context, ensuring the commitment of existing national and European intermediary organisations to the success of the new policy concepts. Since the Sixth Framework Programme will be intertwined more than ever with the research areas of the individual EU Member States, connecting the ERA mechanisms pragmatically and tactically to national research systems would be entirely in the spirit of the ERA.

Cultural preconditions

Taking the divergence of national research traditions into account would be one of the socio-cultural preconditions for ERA's success. Other conditions associated with this dimension would be the elimination of all barriers to horizontal mobility of researchers, the creation of a hospitable residential climate for researchers from third countries, the improvement of intercultural communication and the promotion of language training in transnational networks and integrated projects. Additional attention may have to be given to problems of organisational culture and optimum numbers in such transnational European cooperative ventures.

On top of this, it would be in line with the ERA spirit, ideology, instruments and mechanisms if the European Commission were to explicitly offer its own Joint Research Centre as a breeding ground, experimental laboratory and workshop not only for the provision of services in integrated projects and networks of excellence, but also for fully fledged participation. At the same time, sale or transfer of JRC branches or activities should not be excluded if interested parties are agreeable.

Participants and actors in the emerging European research landscape should not wait for the ideal pan-European solution of research coordination, which may fail to materialise anyway. Precisely because their research systems are quite

different, bringing, for example, the three most important research countries in the EU (Germany, France and the UK) and their research bodies at least partly onto the same wavelength in an ERA context would already be a major achievement. The promotion of such trilateral cooperation initiatives should not be perceived as a threat to others - quite the reverse.

Finally, in order to preserve or create broadly based support for the European dimension of science, research and technology development, the EC should not only promote awareness of science generally, but also a public awareness of the European dimension as such. In Dutch broadsheets European research policy, despite its importance as the third largest budget category of the EU, is hardly ever mentioned.

CONCLUSION

Then and Now: Spinelli and Busquin

Making a comparison between the periods of Spinelli/(Dahrendorf) and of Busquin, between the 'European Scientific Area' and the 'European Research Area' is quite a tall order. Moreover, it would be most unfair to Altiero Spinelli, who exercised his duties as European Commissioner responsible for scientific research in a completely different context from that of his colleague Philippe Busquin, thirty years later.

Spinelli had to operate in a virtual vacuum as regards an integrated research policy at Community level. Scientific research was mainly conducted at national level; at the level of the European Communities it was limited to a few sectors and, as the history of EURATOM has taught us, those examples of communautarian research cooperation had for the most part failed because they lacked the solid basis of a common industrial and energy policy.

In the Spinelli years, scientific research and technological development remained largely outside the scope of Community policy. For Spinelli, the Single European Act, the Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, which all contributed to the development of an *acquis communautaire* in the field of scientific research and technology, were no more than a distant prospect. Integration of research activities at all possible levels and covering all scientific disciplines did not yet exist. The first Community Framework Programme was to start only a decade later.

Thirty years on, Busquin took up his duties as European Commissioner in a much more favourable environment. An elaborate, yet far from perfect legal and institutional infrastructure for Community-level research had been established. Moreover, Busquin's proposal for a 'European Research Area', which he launched in January 2000 shortly after he became Research Commissioner, received an enormous boost at the Lisbon Summit in March of that year when the European Council of Heads of State and Government considered the ERA concept an essential element in the Council's endeavour to make Europe the most competitive knowledge-based society in the world by the year 2010. The Council even urged Commissioner Busquin to complete the ERA as soon as possible. Hence Busquin's proposal received endorsement at the highest political level in Europe.

When Spinelli took office in the summer of 1970 he landed in the middle of a serious crisis. The Joint Research Centre, once labelled the jewel of EURATOM, was fighting for its life, and not one of the then six Member States was prepared to go to its aid. Spinelli who, besides industrial affairs and research was also specifically responsible for the JRC, had to travel to the main nuclear installation of the JRC in Ispra, in his home country of Italy, to try to avert a strike by the Ispra technicians and researchers, who were afraid that their contracts of employment were to be terminated. And so much had already been learned about (lack of) nuclear safety that a strike in a nuclear plant was considered a very dangerous matter. With his special skills Spinelli was able to defuse the strike, and by devising a reconstruction and reform plan for the JRC, he set the Centre on the path towards recovery.

Confident of a new relaunch of the European integration process following the disappearance of the French President General de Gaulle from the international scene, Spinelli set about his task of developing a truly European research policy. Driven by his federalist ideals and his communist upbringing, he opted for a centrally controlled, 'dirigist' research policy aimed at industry. However, his plan fell on stony ground; in particular, the Member States were not prepared to accept his proposal to establish a European Research and Development Agency (ERDA), as a key element in this centralist vision. The idea was swept from the negotiating table very early on, during the deliberations in COREPER. Moreover, Spinelli's emphasis on industry, and therefore his preference for coordination in the field of applied research over that of fundamental research, was unacceptable to the Member States because of the direct impact this had on competition.

Spinelli's proposals, which were - in Luca Guzzetti's words - the first tests in the theoretical laboratory for the feasibility of a Community research policy, were undoubtedly correct from an economic and industrial point of view, but were politically unattainable - despite the new European optimism. They were sound but poorly timed proposals. It might be said that Spinelli was too far ahead of his time.

In institutional terms, too, Spinelli was very unfortunate. At the start of his term of office, Spinelli had restructured the Directorates-General under his command in such a way that the link he deemed necessary between scientific research and industry was reflected in the internal structure of the European Commission. However, in 1973 this new structure was undone by overall changes in the Commission's internal structure which had been necessitated by the prospect of

the accession to the EC of three new Member States: the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark.

These changes meant that from 1973 onwards Spinelli, now responsible solely for industrial affairs, had to concentrate on the development of a Community industrial policy, while Ralf Dahrendorf took over the scientific research portfolio. Spinelli faced a simply impossible task. In 1973 the energy crisis emerged and the ensuing economic recession led the Member States to opt for a protectionist course, blocking all opportunities for a common industrial policy. Moreover, the negative impact of industrial development on the environment was also coming more and more to the fore.

Dahrendorf, on the other hand, had learned from the political unfeasibility of Spinelli's centralist industrial proposals and was able to revise the policy of his predecessor. Dahrendorf emphasised the cultural rather than the industrial aspects of research and paid more attention to the coordination of national research policies than to the development of a centrally directed Community policy. Dahrendorf's envisaged cultural role of research was epitomised in his idea of a 'European Scientific Area'. With these research policy revisions, Dahrendorf partly succeeded where his predecessor had failed. In January 1974 a number of his proposals were adopted by the European Council in four resolutions, the first European Community resolutions in the field of scientific research and technological development, although the 'European Scientific Area' idea was largely shelved.

To sum up, Spinelli, the Great Federalist, may be regarded as the pioneer of a Community research policy, who in more than one respect had to face fierce political opposition, whereas others adopted many ideals envisaged by Spinelli, refined them and were more successful.

Back to Busquin. Whereas Dahrendorf's 'European Scientific Area' project was still-born, Busquin's 'European Research Area' (ERA) received the full support not only of European political circles, as mentioned above, but also of the scientific world and of business communities. The Sixth Framework programme for research is specifically structured to serve as a framework for the realisation of the ERA. It was adopted by the Council and the Parliament, and will begin in 2003 with a budget of EUR 17.5 billion.

Philippe Busquin thus does not have to struggle against the political opposition experienced by Altiero Spinelli thirty years earlier. With his intelligently formulated federalist ideas, Spinelli has put an indelible stamp on the European

integration process. In recognition of his role, one of the wings of the new European Parliament building in Brussels bears his name. But if it were possible today to ask him to recall his experiences as European Commissioner for Research and Industry, we would expect nothing more than a frowning of his heavy eyebrows.

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SUPPLEMENT

Research on research

In January 2000, Philippe Busquin, the Belgian newly appointed European Commissioner for Research under the Presidency of Romano Prodi, launched his proposal for the establishment and organisation of a European Research Area (ERA). The ERA concept amounts to an ambitious plan incorporating all the relevant objectives of promoting scientific research in the European Union. In fact, the launch of ERA was the next step to the commitment agreed upon at the EU Summit in Lisbon in April 2000 to make Europe the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world. The ERA proposal was motivated by two objectives: to close the technological gap between Europe and the USA and to overcome fragmentation and duplication in European research. The ERA initiative became the driving force behind preparations for the Sixth European Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (2002-2006).

In May 2001, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences (OC&W) asked Clingendael to write a report putting the ERA proposal in its historical perspective and evaluating its chance of success in today's context. The resulting study was published in December 2001 under the title *Van coöperatie via coördinatie tot integratie: van Spinelli tot Busquin: onderzoeksbeleid van de Europese Unie in perspectief* (From Cooperation through Coordination to Integration - From Spinelli to Busquin: Research Policy of the European Union in Perspective). The central chapters of the report compare the efforts of Commissioners Altiero Spinelli and Ralf Dahrendorf in the first half of the 1970s with Philippe Busquin's current plan to establish a common European research policy in an integrated European research landscape. The study concludes that for a number of reasons the Commission's new bottom-up approach, consisting of networks of centres of excellence and integrated projects, may have more success than the top-down methods of a generation ago. A partial translation, extracts and a summary in English are available through the authors, international lawyer Peter A. Schregardus and historian Gerard J. Telkamp, the editors of *Internationale Spectator*, Clingendael's monthly publication on international affairs.

Since March 2002, the authors have been engaged in new research for the OC&W in the field of European Union policy research. This is to be an evaluation of the pros, cons and modalities of the establishment of a European Research Council as an instrument for opening up the national research

programmes of the EU member states. This new body would complement rather than replace the activities of existing intermediate institutions in the sector of research policy, in particular research councils and funding agencies (e.g., NWO in the Netherlands, the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique in France, and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and Max Planck Gesellschaft in Germany). In October of this year, the researchers hope to present an English-language policy discussion paper on the desirability of a European Research Council. In the meantime, they welcome any comments and suggestions. Please e-mail pschregardus@clingendael.nl or gtelkamp@clingendael.nl.



MINISTER VAN ONDERWIJS, CULTUUR EN WETENSCHAPPEN

Philippe Busquin
Lid van de Europese Commissie
Wetstraat 200
1160 BRUSSEL
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Zoetermeer, 14 januari 2002

Ik heb het genoegen U hierbij het rapport aan te bieden "Van Coöperatie via coördinatie tot integratie Van Spinelli tot Busquin: onderzoekbeleid van de Europese Unie in perspectief". Het rapport is in opdracht van mijn ministerie samengesteld door het Nederlands Instituut voor Internationale Betrekkingen "Clingendael".

De uitkomsten van het rapport geven empirische steun aan de door U en de Onderzoekraad voorgestane concrete toekomst van de Europese Onderzoekruimte.

Drs. L.M.L.H.A. Hermans

[Translation of accompanying letter by the Minister of Education, Culture and Science to the European Commissioner for Science, Research & Development]

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Philippe Busquin
Member of the European Commission
Wetstraat 200
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Belgium

Zoetermeer, 14 January 2002

It gives me great pleasure to offer you herewith a copy of the report *From cooperation through coordination to integration. From Spinelli to Busquin: Research policy of the European Union in perspective*. The report was compiled for my Ministry by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'. The findings set out in the report provide empirical support for the practical future of the European Research Area as proposed by you in the Research Council.

L.M.L.H.A. Hermans