

European research area: activities within the scope of the EC framework programme 2002-2006

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This is the second Commission report concerning the implementation of "A Mobility Strategy for the European Research Area". Whilst the first report, published in 2003, focused on the Strategy's implementation this second Report seeks to examine and assess the achievements of the Strategy both at a national, as well as, a Community level. Thus, much of the Report focuses on those policy initiatives, which encourage researcher mobility, including taxation, social security, statistics and the inter-change between academia and industry. In terms of removing legal and administrative obstacles to the mobility of researchers, the Commission observes that significant progress has been made. Member States have strived to create a package of legal instruments which aid third country researcher admission as well as providing for fast track procedures to obtain special residence permits. As far as Community initiatives are concerned the Report notes the creation of the "Pan-European Researcher's Mobility Web Portal", which provides access to a wide range of web resources covering information about research fellowships and grants, job opportunities as well as practical information relevant for settling in a European country. A related initiative includes the creation of the "European Network of Mobility Centres" or ERA-MORE. These mobility centres have been established in thirty European countries and offer help and assistance to researchers and their families relating to practical issues covering both their professional and daily lives. In addition to these initiatives the Report cites legislative progress in the form of one Directive and two Recommendations, which are set to be adopted in 2004. The Directive provides for a fast track procedure for the admission of researchers by offering them a specific residence permit. The Recommendations, on the other hand, allow Member States to accelerate, on a voluntary basis, the implementation of the Directive and to tackle supplementary issues, such as family reunification, short-term visas and co-operation between Member States. The Commission Report suggests that similar actions ought to be undertaken in the field of social security. Lastly, the Commission is committed, during the course of 2004, to implementing the different initiative proposed in its Career Communication.