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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Second periodic reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant
Addendum

FRANCE *, **

[30 June 2000]

* The initial reports concerning rights covered by articles 6 to 9 (E/1984/6/Add.11), 10 to 12 (E/1986/3/Add.10) and 13 to 15 (E/1982/3/Add.30) submitted by the Government of France were considered by the Expert Working Group of the Economic and Social Council and by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1985 (see E/1985/WG.1/SR.5 and 7; E/1982/3/Add.30 and Corr.1), in 1986 (see /1986/WG.1/SR.18,19 and 21; E/1984/6Add.11) and in 1989 (see E/C.12/1989/SR.12 and 13; E/1986/3/Add.10).

** The information submitted in accordance with the consolidated guidelines concerning the initial part of reports of States parties is contained in the core document HRI/CORE/1/Add.17/Rev.1.

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V. RIGHT TO BENEFIT FROM SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS; PROTECTION OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

747. Under French law, everyone has the right to benefit from scientific progress and its applications. For many years, the State has funded a large proportion of scientific research. In 1995, domestic spending on research and development (R&D) represented 2.3% of GDP, compared with 2.25% in 1985. Public funding for R&D increased by 6.2% from 1997 to 1998, amounting to 53 billion francs. The increase will allow the public research bodies to take on more staff. Support for the major R&D programmes run by companies amounted to 5.2 billion francs. The main plank of the support programme for aeronautics was funding for a new Ariane rocket programme.

748. The French government attaches priority to scientific employment, resulting in 6,100 new jobs, including 400 research posts. Holders of doctorates receive additional grants to conduct research and to join enterprises and public institutions involved in research.

749. Basic research, the crucible of discovery, is also being encouraged, through improved financial support for laboratories (+3% in 1998) and research bodies.

750. In 1997, governmental support focused mainly on the life sciences, particularly in two areas:

a) Medical research, with the creation of 100 posts at the national institute for health and medical research. The main areas were computing for medicine, remote medical techniques and research into new medicines;

b) Human sciences and society, with the establishment of a major centre of activities at the national library. Contributors include the universities, institutes and researchers in the human sciences.

751. In technology, funding has been largely redirected towards small, innovative enterprises that create jobs. A venture capital fund is to be made available to young doctoral students to encourage entrepreneurial initiative.

752. A large number of public research bodies have been set up: other than the national centre for scientific research, which operates in many disciplines and covers a great number of topics, many specialized research bodies have been established over the years. Examples are the office for overseas scientific and technical research, the atomic energy authority, the national institute for agronomic research, the national centre for space studies, the national centre for health and medical research, the institute for research into information technology, the national centre for ocean development, the national agency for research valorization, the centre for the study of advanced systems and technologies, the French agency for the use of energy, the world centre for information technology and human resources, and the group for study and research on tropical agronomy.

753. The State provides many grants to encourage research in industrial enterprises:

a) Direct financial assistance channelled via two main routes:

i) The research and technology fund;

ii) The national agency for research valorization (ANVAR), which provides two types of incentive: innovation grants intended to promote technological progress, and which can cover up to 50% of programme expenses, and innovation subsidies intended to encourage small and medium industrial concerns to involve public and private laboratories in their research. Through its regional structure, ANVAR has established successful contacts with small and medium enterprises;

b) Indirect financial assistance for innovation has been stepped up: medium-term credit, special innovation loans, long-term loans, financial support from finance companies concerned with innovation, research training contracts, better technical assistance for small and medium enterprises, and the introduction of a tax credit for research.

754. The fund for subsidies in research and industry also supports and encourages activities. Its grants take the form of either direct funding for research, symposia and publications, or programmes agreed with research teams.

755. The in-house research activities of industrial enterprises should also be mentioned. This research is structured much differently from that carried out by public bodies, in that the system is fairly flexible and the R&D staff rarely have specific research status within the enterprise.

756. The diffusion of scientific knowledge is mainly the responsibility of the authors of research policy. Among these, the inter-ministerial scientific and technical group is of particular interest. Established in 1979 by ministerial decree, the group is active in four main areas:

a) Use of the communications media, especially television, to raise awareness of scientific and technical matters;

b) Enhancement of the cultural and pedagogical role of scientific and technical museums;

c) Development of socio-cultural activities of a scientific nature within the community, particularly among young people;

d) Sensitizing the scientific and cultural community to the concern for information.

757. Finally, the national institute for industrial ownership has established important facilities for distributing technical information and providing access to primary documents. Patents constitute 80% of its available technical information.

VII. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND CONTACTS IN THE SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL FIELDS

B. Scientific

795. For higher education establishments, international relations at the bi- and multilateral levels are vital to the development of training and research. In the context of the advancement, diffusion and sharing of knowledge, the international policy in this field is geared to economic, political and scientific objectives.

1. Cultural co-operation by geographical area

a) Europe

796. The European Union: co-operation in this context now makes a significant contribution to training and to national scientific and technical interests.

797. In addition to the mobility they offer to large numbers of students, teachers and researchers, the university exchanges conducted in the framework of the Socrates and Erasmus programmes (for higher education) and the Leonardo programme (for vocational training) are instrumental in developing high-quality education based on integrated courses that provide joint or double qualifications, and also facilitate co-supervision of theses.

798. The ongoing discussion concerning European recognition for national qualifications has been augmented by bilateral negotiations between countries or institutions, with the purpose of producing agreements on course duration and qualifications.

799. The implementation of the above-mentioned programmes has been backed by expanded provision of language teaching in the first and second university cycles.

800. The countries of central and eastern Europe: teachers and researchers in these countries receive support as a matter of priority from the ministry of education and the ministry for higher education and research.

801. A combination of bilateral and Community-wide programmes has made it possible for many French universities to contribute, through training and research, to the reorganization of higher education and research in those countries and to establish training facilities (e.g. Frenchspeaking courses).

b) Co-operation with industrialized countries

802. The co-operation with the OECD countries is aimed at bringing French science, technology and training into contact with the best representatives in their respective fields. The intention is to create conditions of excellence through co-operation with the leading laboratories, generate access to original systems, and set up high-quality training and research networks.

803. French teaching and research establishments have established fruitful working relations with their counterparts in the emerging countries of south-east Asia and Latin America.

c) Co-operation and development

804. French institutions of higher education help in the development of teaching and research in countries with which it has strong historical ties. This applies particularly to countries of French-speaking Africa, the Mediterranean region and Indo-China. The main components of such programmes are training in administration, economics, management and medicine, the training of trainers, and teacher and student exchanges at the level of the second and third cycles.

2. French higher education in the international context

a) The export of courses

805. A part of these activities concerns the teaching of entire courses in French at universities abroad. These courses enable foreign students to be taught in French by French or Frenchtrained local teachers. The system is operated by the ministry of education, the ministry of higher education and research, and the ministry for foreign affairs, by means of grants, cooperation agreements between universities, etc.

806. A large number of French-foreign courses have been set up in eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Czech Republic, Russia, Poland) and in Turkey. Others are currently being introduced in Lebanon. Discussions on economics and management courses are taking place with Argentina.

807. The other main aspect of these activities involves the teaching of whole courses abroad in the language of the country concerned. This has been done for several years, mainly in the form of short courses at university technical institutes.

b) Facilities for foreign students

808. The size and variety of the foreign student population in French universities indicates the extent of France's international involvement and the global influence of French culture.

809. The French government endeavours to provide foreign students, whether or not they receive grants from their own or this country, with facilities worthy of France and its traditions. The Government tries to help students choose a higher education establishment that meets their wishes and, through a network of national and regional offices, to provide them with access to adequate living conditions.