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Science and Technology Policy in the Service of a Greater Europe

Proceedings of the International Conference on Scientific Policy in the Service of a Greater Europe, Schloss Cecilienhof, Potsdam, 28-29 January 1993

Campus Verlag
Frankfurt/New York

EDITORIAL

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The term »science policy« is a notion stemming from the 1960s. In 1963, for the first time, the OECD called a high-level science policy meeting in Paris. That was, incidentally, the same year in which the United Nations organized the first world conference on science as a development factor.

In 1968 it was for the first time acknowledged, during the OECD debate on the technological« gap between the US and Western Europe, that the ability to apply scientific discoveries for economic purposes is the most important single factor for the international competitiveness of nations.

Consequently »science policy* became, in the 1970s, »science and technology policy« and as such, it was closely linked to both the industrial and the employment policies of nations. The close relationship between science and technology issues on one hand, and environmental policies on the other, gained recognition at the 1972 United Nations Environment Conference in Stockholm. Twenty years later, at the United Nations Rio Conference in 1992, it became dramatically evident on a world scale that science and technology policy can be regarded as *the* survival factor for mankind.

Life in the next century will be heavily influenced by what happens (or does not happen) in the global scientific and technological community today. The ability to generate, control, and use knowledge is universally recognized as a major and growing source of power and social benefit.

Despite worldwide efforts, culminating in 1979 at the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development in Vienna, to reach a more balanced speed in generating scientific knowledge in all regions of the world, more than 80% of the inventory of knowledge is still concentrated in the developed countries of what used to be known as the »first world«, that is the OECD countries, and of the »second world«, that is the former socialist countries.

The present volume deals with the dilemma that the first victim of the necessary, albeit painful, transformation process of creating a market economy in formerly centrally-planned countries seems to be, without exception, their scientific and technological infrastructure.

To solve issues of global concern, it is intolerable that the harsh economic realities of everyday life should rapidly destroy the stock of scientific and technological talents generated in the decades after World War II in Eastern Europe and in the countries of the former Soviet Union. The same is true for the economic infrastructure in the eastern part of Europe. Industrialized countries cannot survive without innovation capabilities based on science and technology. Furthermore, cooperation between East and West would be reduced to the same relationship that exists with developing countries, which lack adequate research and development infrastructures.

In order to maintain at least some stability and to avoid an even greater brain drain from the East than has been experienced so far, a political awareness must urgently be created in the OECD countries to provide - bilaterally as well as multilaterally - a chain of supporting activities. The present volume presents a series of national presentations together with a survey of actions proposed, or already launched, by international agencies. It also contains a catalogue of the most important remedial actions required, which was presented to the *Meeting of Senior Officials from Administrations Responsible for Science and Research Policy in the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention* at the special session of the Committee on March 2-4, 1993, in Strasbourg, France.

Berlin, November 1993