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

Initial reports submitted by States Parties  
under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Addendum

BELGIUM

[3 May 1993]

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(b) Scientific and policy research

283. Responsibilities in this area are divided between the national authorities (federal powers) and the Communities and Regions (basic research involving universities, links with economic policies).

284. The national authorities remain competent in matters of research in regard to the implementation of international and supranational agreements and other instruments, the establishment and organization of data exchange networks among scientific institutions at the national or international level, and space research. Under certain conditions the Belgian Government can make proposals for research activities to the Communities and Regions.

285. As far as the dissemination of scientific information is concerned, rules and regulations governing scientific bodies, as well as researchers' contracts of employment, may restrict the right to publication of scientific findings, either to avoid publicizing insufficiently conclusive results or for reasons of professional ethics or for the preservation of copyright of other forms of intellectual property.

286. The scientific policy planning services (SPPS) deal, among other things, with the collection, processing and analysis of data on Belgian research potential as a whole; this information is made available to various categories of user.

287. National research promotion programmes aim at encouraging research directed towards objectives of common interest and public utility connected with improvement of the standard of living and the general competitiveness of the economy.

288. These programmes include work in the following areas: global changes, satellite remote sensing, Antarctic research, marine science, health hazards, transport and mobility, information technology, life sciences, AIDS and high-temperature supraconductors.

289. Without going into the details of these programmes, particular mention can be made of the following in the context of this report:

The "health hazards" programme whose goal is to stimulate scientific study of health hazards connected with the use of new and existing technologies in working life, and with environment and food (microbiological contamination of foodstuffs, safety of "new foods", food allergy and intolerance);

An in-depth research programme on AIDS problems as a whole;

A "social science" programme designed to formulate tools for social science research;

A "citizen's legal welfare" programme aimed at studying the qualitative and structural aspects of the legal system of interest to citizens, with a view to improving its transparency and adjusting it to socio-economic, technological and medical changes.