Third, the European Regional Development Fund currently funds regional programmes for innovation. These include actions in the field of the knowledge economy involving over 90 regions for the period 2001-2004 mobilising nearly EUR 300 million of public and private funding. The main objective of these programmes is to identify new actions and policy avenues which allow regions to increase R &TDI investments in the future, and thus help them spur their regional economies and attain the 'Lisbon objectives'.

In addition to the actions under the Structural Funds, the Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development support collaborative research and networks between researchers located in different Member States and third countries. The recently launched sixth Framework Programme, with a budget of EUR 17.5 billion for the period 2002-2006 supports the creation of a European Research Area to promote the free movement of knowledge, researchers and technology (1). The regional dimension of research is an important part of the European Research Area project.

Before the end of 2003, the Commission will present new proposals for regional policy in an enlarged Europe taking account of the needs to maintain efforts to improve economic competitiveness. In the second progress report on economic and social cohesion, the Commission presented new data on the regional deficits in relation to R &TDI in the regions in the new, and in the existing, Member States.

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(2003/C 161 E/183) WRITTEN QUESTION E-0119/03
by Jorge Hernández Mollar (PPE-DE) to the Commission
(28 January 2003)

Subject: EU participation in the enlargement of the La Concepción dam, Marbella

The enlargement of the La Concepción dam in Marbella (Spain) is running dangerously behind schedule, which gives cause for concern as it is an essential source of water for the whole of the Costa del Sol at a point in time when a further 30,000 hotel rooms are under construction in the area, pointing to a significant increase in tourism in this part of the developing region of Andalusia.

The enlargement of the dam will consist of the laying of a new section of dam, which will add 16 metres to the dam's current height and will almost double the capacity of the reservoir from 56 cubic hectometres today to over one hundred cubic hectometres.

How much is the Community contributing to this very important project to supply water to the Costa del Sol? To what extent would the Commission be prepared to consider giving the project a firm helping hand?

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Answer given by Mr Barnier on behalf of the Commission
(27 February 2003)

On 11 December 2002 the Spanish authorities sent the Commission an application for assistance from the Cohesion Fund for a study entitled El estudio y redacción del proyecto y estudio de impacto ambiental del recrecimiento de la presa de la Concepción (The study and drafting of the project and environmental impact assessment for increasing the height of the La Concepción dam). This is a technical study in support of an eligible project, the total eligible cost of which is EUR 575,980. The rate of Community part-financing requested by the Spanish authorities is 85%. The Commission is currently considering the application.

The Commission will consider any application for aid made by the Spanish State for the enlargement of this dam, whether from the Cohesion Fund or the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), in strict compliance with the rules in force.

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