

# EU sets out new science plan

October 7 2009, By RAF CASERT , Associated Press Writer

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(AP) -- European authorities and industry must increase funding for scientific research and improve cooperation to try to close the technology gap with the United States, the European Commission said Tuesday.

An EU commissioned report sets tough targets to be met by 2030: increasing research and development funding to 5 percent of gross domestic product and tripling spending on higher education to 3.3 percent of [gross domestic product](#).

The report of the European Research Area Board said the EU's 27 member nations often prefer to fund research projects within their borders rather than contribute to projects in other nations that might produce greater breakthroughs.

"Lots of small initiatives are not going to solve" vast problems facing the world, said Prof. John Wood, the ERAB chairman. "We cannot have 27 member states playing small games everywhere."

The report says many of Europe's research institutes are underfunded, and notes that the European Union is spending 1.1 percent of its GDP on [higher education](#) this decade, compared with 2.6 percent for the U.S.

The same is evident in the private sector, with 1 percent of GDP being spent on scientific research in Europe, compared with 2.62 percent in Japan and 1.69 percent in the U.S. President [Barack Obama](#) says he wants to boost U.S. funding for research and development to 3 percent

of GDP.

Far too few European doctoral candidates work outside their home countries, the report said, calling for the proportion to be tripled to 20 percent by 2030. Scientists working abroad can more easily locate research projects in their preferred sector when they are not limited to finding work in their own country.

It said research institutes should coordinate better with other EU nations and with the private sector through joint research projects. It notes the European Commission's own research-and-development programs are also criticized as "having acquired too much bureaucratic baggage," leaving scientists to deal with paperwork more than with cutting edge research.

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