

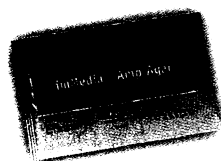


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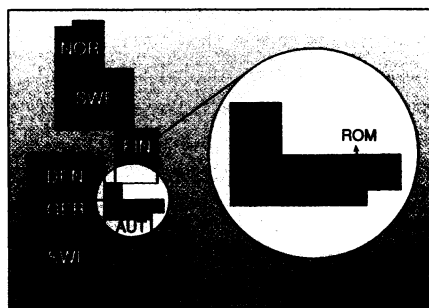
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## SCIENCE'S COMPASS

direct relation between citation rates (a debated, but nevertheless useful, proxy for the impact of basic research) and actual or potential technological developments, the diagram suggests that Hungary clearly surpasses Denmark, Switzerland, and Austria, but falls short of the USSR, Czechoslovakia,



Per capita citation rates in Hungary, 1985.

and Poland. This strange figure not only questions the claimed vanguard role of Hungary among the former Soviet-bloc countries, but is inconsistent with any so-far published similar statistics. A figure (above) based on a recent European Community compilation (1) shows a radically different picture. The per capita citation rate of Hungary stands out in the Central-East Euro-

pean region, but is dwarfed by the values in the more developed parts of Europe, particularly by those of the Scandinavian countries. A similar picture can be obtained if, instead of the total population, the total research and development personnel or the number of scientists and engineers is used as a reference base. We sincerely hope that we do not irreparably damage the reputation of Hungary by placing it behind Switzerland or Denmark, but rather give evidence of another Hungarian virtue: modesty.

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### References

1. *Second European Report on S&T Indicators, 1997* (EUR 17639, European Community, Brussels, December 1997), Statistical Annex, S-54–55, Table A.5.3, "Number of citations"; *ibid.*, Statistical annex, S-124–125, Table B.4.1, "Population."

## Our Public Image

The issues of 5, 12, and 19 March make interesting back-to-back reading regarding public outreach by scientists. Michael Crichton's essay "Ritual abuse, hot air, and missed opportunities" (Essays on Science and Society, *Science's Compass*, 5 Mar., p. 1461) exhorts scientists to start working effectively with the media, to "assume your power, and shoulder your responsibility to get your message to the waiting world." Crichton notes that there are many scientists who would do so if it were not for the fear of "professional scorn." A week later, in their editorial "Congress and U.S. research" (12 Mar, *Science's Compass*, p. 1639), Erich Bloch and Charles M. Vest make the same exhortation, urging scientists to take "every opportunity...to explain the benefits" of science. In an editor's note in the 19 March issue (Letters, *Science's Compass*, p. 1850), mention is made of a letter supporting stem cell research signed by 33 Nobel laureates that was sent to President Clinton and Congress on 8 March. Since the editors of *Science* agree with Crichton (Editorial, *Science's Compass*, 5 Mar., p. 1453) that the community "should identify and reward members who...can act as effective spokespersons," I suggest that *Science* lead the way and make it a regular feature to prominently document "best practices" when it comes to public outreach. I think that this would stimulate more scientists—not just Nobel laureates, university presidents, former chief executive officers, and agency directors—to feel empowered to participate.

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