

Research Fund for Coal and Steel: research programme, multiannual technical guidelines

2007/0135(CNS) - 09/07/2007 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to adopt a research programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

BACKGROUND: when the European Coal and Steel Community was wound-up in 2002 its assets were transferred to the Commission for management under the “Research Fund for Coal and Steel”. This Research Fund is intended exclusively for research projects in sectors relating to the coal and steel industry. The multiannual technical guidelines for the programme are set out in Council Decision 2003/78 /EC. The programme covers production processes, the utilisation and conservation of resources, environmental improvements and safety at work in sectors related to the coal and steel community.

The 2003 Decision, however, is in need of review in order to take account of a number of recent developments, including enlargement of the EU; the entry into force of the 7th Framework Programme; and changes to the EU’s energy and sustainable development policies.

CONTENT: the purpose of this proposal, therefore, is to adopt a revised “Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel”, taking account of recent developments, to be referred to as the “Research Programme”. The proposed Council Decision lays down the multiannual technical guidelines for its implementation.

In summary, the Commission is making the following proposals:

- to adjust some of the rules in order to take account of EU enlargement. To maintain the efficient and smooth running of the programme, the Commission proposes that having at least one representative per Member State be abandoned to be replaced by the concept of ensuring the widest possible geographical representation. In addition, following the accession of Estonia, a new term “oil shales” needs to be included under the definition of “coal”.
- not to revise the definition of “steel”. In light of the research topics most likely to receive funding under the 7th framework programme, the current definition is sufficient;
- to delete accompanying measures relating to organising conferences and research fellowships since they are already covered by the Specific Programme “People” in the 7th R&D programme;
- to align the role of the Member States in the Coal and Steel Programme Committee with that of the 7th R&D programme;
- to monitor the RFCS programme for seven, as opposed to five, years;
- to follow *mutatis mutandis* the procedures for the appointment of experts as set out in Regulation (EC) No 1906/2006;
- to maintain the research objectives for coal and steel. The following priorities have been identified: improving the competitive position of Community coal; protecting the environment by improving the use of coal as a clean energy sources, reducing CO₂ emissions from coal

utilisation (such as the capture and storage of greenhouse gas); the management of external dependence as regards energy supply; the reduction of energy consumption and the environmental impact of steelmaking; the conservation of resources and the preservation of the ecosystem in relation to steelmaking; and environmental protection around steelworks;

- to allow the Commission to launch specific calls for research proposals in the context of these research objectives (that take account of the 7th R&D framework programme);
- to maintain the basic principles governing the financial aspects of the research grants;
- to define, more precisely, the definition of “operating cost categories”; and
- to increase the maximum financial contribution from 40 to 50% of the admissible costs. For the other actions, the maximum financial contributions remain unchanged.

All other provisions remain unchanged.