Research and technological development: setting up the ENIAC Joint Undertaking, nanoelectronics

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The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the report by Nikolaos **VAKALIS** (EPP-ED, EL) amending, under the consultation procedure, the proposal for a Council regulation setting up the ENIAC Joint Undertaking.

The key amendments adopted in committee are as follows:

Creation of a Joint Undertaking: the report stipulates that it should be ensured that after the last call for proposals in 2013 projects in progress are implemented, monitored and funded until 2017. The ENIAC Joint Undertaking should also be considered as a Community body as referred to Point 47 of the IIA of 17 May 2006.

Objectives: the Joint Undertaking should promote a public-private partnership aiming at mobilising and pooling Community, national and private efforts, increasing overall R&D investments in the field of Nanoelectronics, fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors and creating synergies among all the Nanoelectronics industry's stakeholders, including corporate players, SMEs and R&D institutes. It should ensure the participation of SMEs in order to enable at least 15% of available funding to be granted to them.

Members: according to the committee, the JTIs need to keep their European focus. Participation of third countries does not seem to contribute to this logic. In addition, the 7th Framework Programme gives ample other possibilities for international cooperation in the research area, including in the field of nanoelectronics.

Financing: in the aim of decreasing to the minimum necessary the expenditure for running costs, while increasing to the maximum possible the resources available for R&D activities, the report states that a financial contribution from the Community of up to EUR 10 million, shall be payable in instalments of up to EUR 1.5 million per annum or a sum equal to50% of the contribution from AENEAS, whichever figure is lower; any part of this contribution not spent during the current year shall be made available in the following years for the R&D activities.

Financial rules: the financial rules of the ENIAC Joint Undertaking may not depart from Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 2343/2002, unless its specific operating needs so require and subject to the prior consent of the Commission. The budgetary authority shall be informed of such derogations.

Staff: the Commission and the participating Member States may second as many officials as needed to the ENIAC Joint Undertaking and recruit the remaining staff needed by contract, taking into account the fact that staff costs should be kept low and the time for the setting up of the ENIAC Joint Undertaking should be short.

Responsibility: some essential clauses of the JU Statutes have been inserted to clarify that the Joint Undertaking shall be solely responsible for meeting its obligations. It shall not be responsible for meeting the financial obligations of its Members. The Members shall not be liable for any of the ENIAC Joint Undertaking’s obligations. The financial liability of the Members shall be an internal liability towards the Joint Undertaking only, limited to their commitment to contribute to the resources.

Report: no later than 31 December 2011 the Commission shall present an evaluation of the ENIAC Joint Undertaking prepared with the assistance of independent experts. This evaluation shall cover the quality and efficiency of the ENIAC Joint Undertaking and progress towards the objectives set. The results of the evaluation shall be taken into consideration so as to reorient, if necessary, the Research Agenda.

Preparatory actions: the Commission and AENEAS shall take all necessary preparatory actions for the setting up of the ENIAC Joint Undertaking until its bodies are fully operational and shall ensure that the ENIAC Joint Undertaking is fully operational within 3 months of the entry into force of this Regulation.

The committee also introduced the following amendments in the annexes:

- the Public Authorities Board may allow other Member States which are not ENIAC Member States to participate in its activities as observers;
- the Public Authorities Board shall elect its Chairperson every two years;
- the Executive Director shall be appointed following a call for expression of interest published in the Official Journal of the European Union, on the internet and in the press in all the Member States of the European Union, for a period of up to 3 years. After an evaluation of the Executive Director's performance, the Board may extend the term of office for a further period of not more than three years, following which a call for expression of interest shall be published in the same way;
- in-kind contributions which shall be subject to an evaluation of their value and relevance to the activities of the ENIAC Joint Undertaking and to acceptance by the Governing Board;
- once approved by the Governing Board, the Multiannual Strategic Plan shall be made public;
- the Annual Activity Report shall identify the participation of SMEs in the ENIAC Joint Undertaking and in the R&D activities;
- calls for proposals shall be made public to the greatest extent possible, including on the internet and in the press in all Member States of the European Union;
- lastly, the report stipulates that the European Parliament needs to be consulted on any important changes to the JU's statutes.