EC/New Zealand agreement: scientific and technological cooperation

2008/0066(CNS) - 04/04/2008 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to conclude on behalf of the European Community, the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the EC and New Zealand.

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the Council

CONTENT: New Zealand is the only non European industrialised country with which the EC still does not have a Science and Technology agreement in force. Currently the cooperation between the Community and New Zealand is based on a Technical Arrangement for Cooperation in Science and Technology between the Commission and the Government of New Zealand which entered into force on 17 May 1991 . This arrangement does not provide for an institutionalised coordination of cooperative activities nor does it provide for specific rules covering the treatment and protection of intellectual property rights. The New Zealand government has repeatedly stated its wish to upgrade the above "Science and Technology arrangement" to a formal agreement. Furthermore, in a letter of 17 October 2006 the New Zealand Minister for Research, Science and Technology stated the case for an upgrade more concretely. The letter identified a number of priority areas of interest for New Zealand, where they would like to strengthen collaboration, notably through the Framework Programme. These areas are: food, agriculture and biotechnology, information and communication technologies, health, environment and researcher mobility. They fully correspond to the areas that the Commission services consider interesting and promising for future collaboration.

The draft Agreement is based on the principles of mutual benefit, reciprocal opportunities for access to each other’s programmes and activities relevant to the purpose of the Agreement, non-discrimination, the effective protection of intellectual property and equitable sharing of intellectual property rights. It provides that the Joint Committee established by the two executive agents of the Parties may make, subject to each Party's domestic approval processes, technical amendments to the Agreement as may be required. The two negotiating sides agreed that these technical amendments should be restricted to the modification of technical terms and references that might be altered in the course of change from one Framework Programme to the other. In order to ensure a quick implementation of these technical amendments and with a view to avoiding an onerous procedure for amendments which leave the substance of the Agreement untouched, the Commission requests the Council to authorise it, according to Article 300 (4) EC Treaty, to approve the modifications on behalf of the Community

The Agreement will be concluded for an initial period of five years and continue in force after this initial period unless either Party notifies the other that it shall be terminated.

In light of the above consideration, the Commission proposes that the Council approve the proposals on signature and conclusion.