

Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS) and multiannual technical guidelines: advisory groups and technical groups

2016/0047(NLE) - 18/02/2016 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to revise Decision 2008/376/EC in order to ensure a coherent framework for participation in both the “Research Fund for Coal and Steel” (RFCS) Programme and Horizon 2020 Framework Programme in sectors relating to the coal and steel industry.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the Council adopts the act after consulting the European Parliament but without being obliged to follow its opinion.

BACKGROUND: after the expiry of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) Treaty in 2012 and under a Protocol annexed to the EU Treaties, the European Member States established the new “**Research Fund for Coal and Steel**” (RFCS) and transferred all remaining assets of the (expired) ECSC to this new fund.

The RFCS Programme provides **annually around EUR 50 million of R&D and Innovation funding** to both coal and steel sectors (with a distribution of 27.2 % for coal and 72.8 % for steel) bringing together industrial partners, SMEs, leading research centres and universities across the European Union to develop knowledge and foster innovation. The Programme is **funded by the EU general budget** and is managed by and under the responsibility of the Commission.

The legal basis laying down the management rules of the RFCS was adopted by the Council in [2003](#) and has already been revised in [2008](#). It provides for systematic periodical reassessments of the programme’s relevance and of the effectiveness of its management rules (multiannual technical guidelines).

CONTENT: the purpose of this proposal is to **amend the legal basis of the research programme dedicated to the Coal and Steel sectors** after the periodical assessment of its management rules with a view to implement the following objectives:

- ensuring a transparent management of a programme funded by the EU general budget and under the responsibility of the Commission with the implementation of the rules of the Commission concerning expert groups;
- facilitating access to funding for beneficiaries with simplified rules and through a proportionate alignment with the rules of the general research programme ‘[Horizon 2020](#)’ with which Coal and Steel stakeholders are familiar;
- updating the provisions referred to in the legal basis concerning in particular comitology.

The proposed revision of the RFCS legal basis is focused on the management rules of the RFCS programme (chapter III) and aligns, as much as possible the procedures and concepts used for H2020 to facilitate the participation of same beneficiaries to both programmes (RFCS and H2020). In particular:

- the different **category of actors** in a funded project (participant, subcontractor, third party), their eligibility and obligations are defined in accordance with the definitions used in H2020 programme;

- the H2020 appointment procedure for **independent experts** charged with the evaluation of proposals submitted applies for the appointment of independent experts in the RFCS programme;
- the possibility to charge as eligible costs an amount fixed by the Commission as **Staff costs for SME's owners and other natural persons not receiving a salary** is authorised.

In addition, the proposal:

- introduced a clarification on the **nature of the experts** appointed by the Commission to attend the Advisory Groups and the Technical Groups set up by the legal basis of the RFCS Programme is required to avoid any conflict of interests;
- provides that **the composition and tasks of the Advisory Groups and the composition and tasks of the Technical Groups should be revised**. The competencies of the Advisory Groups are focused on the management rules and procedures, the segregation between Advisory and Technical groups is enhanced and the appointment procedure of their members is clarified.

The objectives and the scope of the Programme are unchanged.