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

2020/0141(NLE) - 16/07/2020 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to revise the research objectives for coal and steel of the research programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS) in the light of the Paris Agreement, as well as with the scientific, technological and political objectives of the Union on climate neutrality by 2050.

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: the proposal is part of a legal package revising the RFCS Research Programme. In particular, it is linked to the Commission's proposals to amend Council Decision 2003/76/EC establishing the measures necessary for the implementation of Protocol (No 37) and Council Decision 2003/77/EC laying down the multiannual financial guidelines for managing the assets of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in liquidation and, on completion of the liquidation, the assets of the RFCS.

The proposal responds to the need to bring the RFCS Research Programme in line with the Paris Agreement, the Commission's European Green Deal, the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan Communications, the New Circular Economy Action Plan and the Commission's New Industrial Strategy for Europe.

CONTENT: the proposal amending Decision 2008/376/EC aims to:

- update the coal research objectives in line with the European Green Deal and the Just Transition Mechanism, namely to: (i) to support a just transition of the coal sector and coal regions; (ii) improve health and safety in coal mines under closure and in previously exploited coal mines; and (iii) minimise the environmental impacts of coal mining sites in transition;

- update steel research objectives in line with the European Green Deal and the Investment Plan for a Sustainable Europe: (i) developing low-carbon steel production processes to improve product quality and increase productivity; (ii) new advanced steel grades, improved steel properties, prolonging service life, high performance steels for applications such as mobility; (iii) recycling techniques for obsolete steel, waste treatment, pollution control and environmental protection at the workplace and in the steel industry; (iv) improving working conditions, including health, safety and ergonomics at the workplace;(iv) improvement of working conditions, including health, safety and ergonomics at work; including research activities under co-programmed European partnerships in the activities to be funded;

- repeal a reference to the consultation of the Committee where the estimated amount of the European Union contribution under the RFCS Research Programme is equal to or more than EUR 600 000;

- make applicable the general rules on remunerated external experts laid down in the Financial Regulation, instead of a special regime for experts under the research framework programme.