European Partnership on Metrology

2021/0049(COD) - 23/02/2021 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to set up a European Partnership on Metrology jointly undertaken by several Member States.

PROPOSED ACT: Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: metrology is the scientific study of measurement. It is a key enabler of economic and social activity and, as such, is a public good. Currently, metrology research programmes lack impact at EU level due to the fragmentation of activities and the duplication of effort across Member States.

Horizon Europe, the new EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027), aims to increase the EU’s research and innovation impact by combining European partnership co-investment with additional private and public sector funds in areas where the scope and scale of the research and innovation resources can help achieve the EU's Horizon Europe priorities.

Under Article 8(1)(c) of the Horizon Europe Regulation, institutionalised partnerships based on Articles 185 and 187 TFEU shall be implemented under several conditions.

Metrology was acknowledged by the co-legislators as one of the priority areas identified for possible Institutionalised European Partnerships.

CONTENT: the Commission proposal relates to the participation of the European Union in the European metrology programme undertaken by several Member States. It builds on the lessons learnt from the European metrology research programme (EMRP) and the European metrology programme on innovation and research (EMPIR).

However, the present initiative represents a new partnership to meet new challenges. It is not intended as a mere continuation of previous programmes.

The partnership aims to accelerate Europe's global lead in metrology research, establishing self-sustaining European metrology networks aimed at supporting and stimulating new innovative products, responding to societal challenges and enabling effective design and implementation of regulation and standards underpinning public policies.

Objectives

The Metrology Partnership seeks to:

- develop a sustainable coordinated metrology system on a European level;

- ensure that state-of-the-art metrology capabilities are taken up directly by innovators in their ecosystems;

- increase the impact of metrology on societal challenges in relation to the implementation of policies, standards and regulations to make them fit for purpose.

- develop by 2030 new research capabilities which are built within the framework of new European Metrology Networks and which perform in terms of calibration and measurement capabilities at least equal to the leading metrology institutes outside the Participating States;

- support, by 2030, sales of new innovative products and services through the use and adoption of the new metrology capabilities in key emerging technologies;

- contribute fully and effectively, by 2030, to the design and implementation of specific standards and regulations that underpin public policies addressing societal challenges.

Specific provisions

The proposal lays down the following specific provisions:

- geographical scope: the proposed Decision determines the current and possible future geographical scope of the partnership;

- obligations under which Member States and other participating countries can contribute to the future partnership. It clarifies that participating countries should not only match the EU contribution but also fund other relevant activities, such as future European metrology networks;

- rules of participation for which there may be a derogation to the Horizon Europe rules in duly justified cases; it also sets the minimum guarantees to ensure more openness of future calls, for instance not only national metrology institutes but also other stakeholders should be entitled to coordinate future projects under this partnership;

- future governance of the partnership: while it is mainly for EURAMET to set up this partnership, the Commission proposes setting up an external Steering Group co-chaired by the Commission and a Member State representative; the Group should offer an impetus for the new partnership to be closer to users' needs and strengthen its impact on industry, regulation and standard setting. The Group should also include representatives from other European partnerships with private partners;

Budgetary implications

The EU's maximum financial contribution, including EFTA appropriations, to the metrology partnership should be EUR 300 million in current prices for the duration of the Horizon Europe framework programme.

The EU's financial contribution should not be used to cover the administrative costs of the Metrology Partnership.

The provisions of the Decision and of the contribution agreement to be concluded between the Commission and the dedicated implementation structure (Euramet e.V.) should ensure that the EU's financial interests are protected.