

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

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The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted the report by Cristian-Silviu BUOI (EPP, RO) on the proposal for a Council decision amending Decision 2008/376/EC on the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel and on the multiannual technical guidelines for this programme.

As a reminder, the aim of the proposed Council decision is 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, the European Green Deal, the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan, the New Circular Economy Action Plan and the New Industrial Strategy for Europe.

The committee responsible recommended that the European Parliament give its consent to the conclusion of the agreement.

Amendments to the proposed Council Decision

The committee proposed that the Research Programme should:

- provide support to all relevant stakeholders, including SMEs, for collaborative research in the coal and steel sectors;
- provide support for clean steel breakthrough technologies leading to near zero-carbon steel making projects as well as research projects, including large industrial research projects, for managing the just transition of formerly operating coal mines or coal mines in the process of closure.

The scope of the research projects has been extended with a view to:

- supporting the phasing out of fossil fuels, to develop alternative activities on former mine or coal power plant sites and avoid or restore environmental damage of coal mines in the process of closure, formerly operating coal mines and their surroundings;
- developing and testing of carbon dioxide capture, use and storage technologies related to coal use, including carbon recycling in fuels and materials, with a view to promoting the circular economy;
- developing clean energy in former coal sites, paying particular attention to energy efficiency and security of supply, including the exploitation of geothermal resources, energy storage, e-fuels, and hydrogen from renewable sources;
- converting coal heating and cooling infrastructure, such as district heating and cooling networks and industrial processes, to renewable heating and cooling alternatives such as geothermal energy;
- focusing on diseases related to mining activities, with a special emphasis on air pollution induced diseases.

Moreover, preference should be given to projects based on innovative technologies and those aimed at promoting the circular economy.

