Establishing the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (‘STEP’)

2023/0199(COD) - 27/02/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 517 votes to 59, with 51 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (‘STEP’).

The European Parliament's position adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure amends the Commission's proposal as follows:

The STEP objectives

The proposed Regulation establishes a **Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform** (STEP) to support critical and emerging strategic technologies and their respective value chains in relevant sectors.

STEP aims to: (i) ensure Union sovereignty and security; (ii) reduce the Union's strategic dependencies in strategic sectors; (iii) strengthen the Union’s competitiveness by strengthening its resilience and productivity and by mobilising financing; (iv) favour a level playing field for investments in the internal market; (v) foster cross-border participation, including of SMEs, strengthen economic; (vi) social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among Member States and regions and (vii) promote inclusive access to attractive quality jobs by investing in the skills of the future and making its economic, industrial and technological base fit for the green and digital transitions.

The STEP should pursue the following objectives:

1) **Supporting the development or manufacturing of critical technologies throughout the Union**, or safeguarding and strengthening their respective value chains, in the following sectors: (i) digital technologies, including those contributing to the targets and objectives of the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030, multi-country projects, and deep tech innovation; (ii) clean and resource efficient technologies, including net-zero technologies as defined in the Net-Zero Industry Act; (iii) biotechnologies, including medicinal products on the Union list of critical medicines and their components;

2) **Addressing shortages of labour and skills critical** to all kinds of quality jobs in support of the objective set out in point (a), in particular through life-long learning, education and training projects, including the European Net-Zero Industry Academies established pursuant to the relevant provision of the Net-Zero Industry Act, and in close cooperation with social partners and education and training initiatives already in place.

Financial Support

STEP should **mobilise resources from existing EU programmes**, including InvestEU, Horizon Europe, the European Defence and Innovation Funds, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Just Transition Fund (FTJ), the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the EU Health Programme and the Digital Europe Programme.

The resources mobilised through these EU programmes should be accompanied by **additional funding of EUR 1.5 billion** from the European Defence Fund for projects contributing to the achievement of the STEP objectives.

Sovereignty Seal

The Commission should award a Sovereignty Seal to any project contributing to any of the STEP objectives, provided that the project has been assessed and complies with minimum quality requirements, in particular eligibility, exclusion and award criteria, provided for in a call for proposals. A call for proposals may include geographical limitations and should, where appropriate, in accordance with the relevant sector-specific Union legislation, include obligations to respect working and employment conditions under applicable Union and national law, International Labour Organization conventions and collective agreements.

The Sovereignty Seal should be valid for the period of implementation of the project to which it was awarded and shall cease to be valid if that project has not started within five years of the award, or the project has been relocated outside the Union.

Implementation of the STEP

In order to implement the STEP, the Commission should, in particular:

- promote the Sovereignty Seal in particular to enhance the visibility of projects that have been awarded the Sovereignty Seal and of projects that have received funding under the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund, the ESF+ or the JTF;

- set up and manage the **Sovereignty Portal** (publicly accessible website established by the Commission), in particular to bring all Union funding opportunities closer to potential beneficiaries and enhance transparency towards Union citizens;

- liaise with national competent authorities and other relevant stakeholders, with a view to coordinating and exchanging information about the financial needs, existing bottlenecks and best practices in access to funding within the scope of this Regulation;

- foster contacts across the sectors of the technologies, making particular use of existing industrial alliances, networks and structures, including the Net-Zero Europe Platform established by the Net-Zero Industry Act and the European Critical Raw Materials Board established by the Critical Raw Materials Act;

- promote consistency, coherence, synergy and complementarity among Union programmes to support projects contributing to the STEP objectives.

Evaluation of the STEP

By 31 December 2025, the Commission should provide the European Parliament and the Council with an interim evaluation report on the implementation of the STEP, for the purpose of informing future decision-making.

The interim evaluation report should, where appropriate, be accompanied by a **legislative proposal** for an amendment of this Regulation with the aim of reducing the Union’s strategic dependencies and strengthening Union industrial policy, while ensuring the proper functioning of the internal market, avoiding market distortions and creating a level playing field in the Union, or by legislative proposals for other initiatives that pursue similar objectives.

At the end of the implementation of the Union programmes by which the STEP is financially supported, but no later than 31 December 2031, the Commission should provide a final evaluation report on the implementation of the STEP.