Resaerch RTD, 5th framework-programme EC 1998-2002: research, technological development and demonstration activities

1997/0119(COD) - 23/03/1998 - Council position

The common position incorporates a large number of Parliament's amendments, whilst respecting the general approach of the Commission proposal. The Council followed four guiding principles: - the need for a more focused and concentrated Community research effort based on greater efficiency and added value; - the role of the Framework Programme as a instrument for the realization of major Community objectives, in particular, improving the competitiveness of European industry vis-à-vis its international competitors, stimulating growth and employment and improving quality of life; - a realistic approach in setting objectives and defining activities, taking into account that the Union's priorities are evolving in the framework of Agenda 2000 and that a new financial perspective will be negotiated during the lifetime of the Fifth Framework Programme; - the need for simplicity and clarity of the text, thereby avoiding details best suited to the specific programmes. In relation to the main aspects of the Framework Programme, the Council's position is as follows. (1) Structure and content of the programme: The common position follows the Commission's approach, based on concentrating activities around a limited number of programmes. The Council, however, has included a fourth thematic programme devoted to research in the areas of energy and the environment, with a consequential transfer of certain key actions from the thematic programmes 'quality of life' and 'competitive growth' to this new programme. The Council has also: - divided the fourth thematic programme into two subprogrammes on environment and energy respectively, each with a separate budgetary allocation; - split the energy sub-programme into two key actions, giving more emphasis to renewable energy sources; - approved for the most part the key actions proposed by the Commission but made provision for new key actions on the ageing population and global change and a combined key action on land transport and marine technologies; - introduced a new key action on marine sciences in the environment programme. As regards the horizontal activities, the common position introduces some changes to pay greater attention to SMEs and the socio-economic dimension, by introducing a new key action on socio-economic research. With the future enlargement of the Union in mind, particular measures to facilitate participation in the Framework Programme of States in the preaccession phase have also been incorporated. (2) Overall amount: The Council has reached an agreement on an amount of ECU 12 740 million, divided as follows: - first activity (research programmes); ECU 10 039 million - second activity (international cooperation); ECU 458 million - third activity (dissemination and optimization); ECU 350 million - fourth activity (training and mobility of researchers); ECU 1 205 million - direct activities to be carried out by the Joint Research Centre (JRC); ECU 688 million. In view of the fact that the current financial perspective expires at the end of 1999, the overall amount will be distributed between the first and second periods of the Framework Programme: ECU 3 100 million for the period 1998 to 1999 and ECU 9 640 million for the period 2000 to 2002. The common position provides for a new decision by Parliament and the Council if the overall amount proves not to be compatible with the new financial perspectives for the years 2000-2002, or in the absence of a financial perspective. A joint declaration by the three institutions would ensure compliance with this provision. The overall amount will need to be revised in the event of accession of new Member States during the lifetime of the Fifth Framework Programme. (3) Breakdown of funds: The common position follows the Commission proposal with regard to the breakdown of funds between the four activities of the Framework Programme. It nevertheless gives a higher priority to Activity 2 (international cooperation) and Activity 3 (innovation and SMEs). The common position also reflects the importance attached by the Council to the training and mobility of researchers, in the context of measures to stimulate growth and employment (it maintains the relative share of activity 4 at the level proposed by the Commission, i.e. 10%). The Joint Research Centre will gradually adopt a more competitive approach. (4) Implementation and management: Whilst sharing a number of the concerns expressed by Parliament regarding the need for

efficient and transparent implementation and management, the Council considers that this is a question to be dealt with in the specific programme decisions.