RTD Euratom framework programme 2002-2006: participation of undertakings, research centres and universities

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PURPOSE : to establish rules for the participation of enterprises, research centres and universities in research carried out under the framework programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for research and training activities aimed at contributing towards the creation of the European Research Area (2002-2006). CONTENT : the rules for participation adopted by the Council are one of the legal instruments implementing the Community framework programme for research. The new rules have been drawn up with the twofold aim of: - Adapting the rules on participating in research programmes in line with the philosophy and characteristics of the new framework programme, especially the principles of the proposed new procedures for intervention and financial support; - Simplifying and streamlining existing provisions to make them clearer and easier to understand. The framework established complies with the above principles. Moreover, unlike the existing rules, the new rules on participation are not intended to be supported by an implementing regulation. To assist in the creation of the European Research Area, the 2002-2006 framework programme applies the following principles, especially through the networks of excellence and integrated projects: - The principle of opening projects to new participants; - Flexibility in operational conditions, including procedures for launching new activities; - Great autonomy in project implementation, with participants carrying out their tasks in largely self-determined conditions and internal arrangements best suited to completing projects successfully. The following new features have been introduced into the rules for participation and financing to apply the above principles and to bring the rules into line with the characteristics and objectives of the new framework programme : - Participants from Member States and from Associated candidate countries have exactly the same rights and obligations; - European scientific co-operation organisations are entitled to participate in the framework programme on exactly the same footing as any entity established in a Member State (this is not the case at present); - General criteria have been drawn up for the selection of proposals taking account of the specific objectives of the new instruments; - The Community will make its financial contribution in new forms of 'grants for integration' for the networks of excellence or 'grants to the budget' for integrated projects, providing important flexibility and involving less cumbersome and more effective controls, essentially ex post controls; - Consortia responsible for networks and integrated projects are given the opportunity to change the partnership, including through competitive calls, subject to clearly defined conditions, and on the basis of simplified Commission consent; - Specific rules for participation to Research and Training activities under the priority thematic area "Fusion Energy Research" have been defined to take into account the characteristics of this field; As such, the rules have been drawn up so as to guarantee the smooth operation of projects, capable of involving large numbers of participants and conducted through evolving partnerships. These rules have been defined in consultation with programme users, the scientific community and industry. The same principles will apply in the more detailed technical implementation provisions for carrying out the framework programme, in particular, those set out in the model contract and the work programmes. Users and national authorities will be consulted on these provisions. In accordance with one of the key principles of the 2002-2006 framework programme, the model contract and work programmes will be prepared with the same goals as the reworking of the present rules, namely simplification and streamlining. The current financial provisions in the model contract and grant application forms will, therefore, be simplified.