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

1997/0119(COD) - 30/04/1997 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVE: the proposal for a decision seeks to establish a Fifth Community Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities (1998-2002). SUBSTANCE: in submitting its draft Fifth Framework Programme for research and technological development 1998-2002, the European Commission followed a new approach whose main characteristics are as follows: - focusing of research efforts on a limited number of objectives in order to avoid scattering resources; - greater attention to the dissemination and exploitation of research findings; - flexible implementation and the simplification of administrative procedures; - in the context of the Intergovernmental Conference, less cumbersome decision-making procedures providing for the adoption of the framework programme by a qualified majority. Alongside this, a set of detailed and objective criteria has been drawn up to define the content of the framework programme, grouped together in three families: (a) social objectives, chief among which is the impact on employment; (b) scientific, technological and economic development, the basic objective being to increase the European Union's competitiveness; (c) lastly, 'European added value'. To make it easier to focus efforts on a smaller number of objectives, the Fifth Framework Programme is organized on the basis of six major programmes reflecting the four activities provided for in the Treaty for the implementation of the framework programme: three 'thematic' programmes corresponding to the first activity referred to in the Treaty (research programmes); three 'horizontal' programmes corresponding to activities II (international cooperation), III (dissemination and exploitation of results) and IV training and mobility of researchers). The general topics of these activities are as follows: - Thematic programmes: (a) unlocking the resources of the living world and the ecosystem; (b) creating a user-friendly information society; (c) promoting competitive and sustainable growth; - Horizontal programmes: (a) confirming the international role of European research; (b) innovation and participation of SMEs; (c) improving human potential. Each of the three thematic programmes comprises: - a series of key actions (16 are proposed) linked to the major economic and social objectives as far as the future of the Union is concerned; - activities for research and development of generic technologies; - activities in support of research infrastructures. With a view to achieving maximum efficiency, the thematic and horizontal programmes are both complementary and interrelated, one of the main functions of the horizontal programmes being to contribute to the smooth implementation of the thematic programmes. The Commission is also proposing to introduce a greater degree of coordination both between the various activities under the framework programme and with other Union policies and national research programmes; it also suggests closer links with the European cooperation frameworks COST and EUREKA.. In addition, Articles 130k, l and n of the EC Treaty will be exploited as an adjunct to the other activities under the framework programme, for example through the implementation of measures of particular interest to only a small number of Member States. In order to increase management flexibility and respond to unexpected situations, within each programme a 'free space' will be created, i.e. funds which can be made available quickly in order to finance an urgent measure. Finally, the Commission wishes to improve the methods by which the framework programme is managed: - by relaxing procedures and shortening deadlines in such a way as to facilitate access to the programmes, in particular for SMUs; - by carrying out its implementing role to the full: the bulk of the authority for implementing the specific programmes would be delegated to the Commission alone, with the programme committees taking decisions only on the definition of the programmes and the indicative allocation of the amounts, and no longer on individual measures such as the selection of projects and their funding. As regards the financial and budgetary aspects, at this stage the Commission is not proposing a financial framework; it will do so when it adopts its proposal future financing framework, immediately after the Intergovernmental Conference in July 1997. However, the Commission takes the view that the average percentage of Union GNP reached by the Fourth Framework

Programme between 1995 and 1998 must represent a minimum for the overall funding of the Fifth Framework Programme expressed as a percentage of average forecast GNP between 1999 and 2002.