RTD 5th Euratom framework programme 1998-2002: participation of undertakings, research centres and universities

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Adopting the report by Mr Pedro MARSET CAMPOS (GUE, E), the European Parliament put forward the following amendments to the Commission proposal: - indirect RTD actions may be performed by a cluster of SMEs and one large enterprise where one or more of them are established in a different EU Member State or in an Associated State; - in the case of highly innovative and rapidly changing information society projects, an exception may be made to the rule that an enterprise must have been operational for at least one year in order to be eligible for EU subsidies. The advance financing of a project by a consortium must never continue for longer than six months; - during the preparatory stage, after submission of the projects on the basis of the call by the Commission, the consortium partners may negotiate with one another about legal and contractual obligations. If, after approval of the consortium's contract by the Commission, the consortium partners are unable to sign the definitive contract within four months, the Commission shall withdraw its approval; - the interval between the deadline for submitting projects and the decision on their eligibility must not exceed four months; - the contract must also lay down what contribution the consortium must make to the dissemination and use of the research results secured and shall also stipulate the output criteria with which a project must comply. For highly innovative projects carried out in a rapidly changing market, the project may be altered to bring it into line with developments; Other Parliament amendments concern: - protection of the Community's financial interests and measures to combat fraud: before conclusion of a contract, the Commission shall always check whether the contracting party is reliable and may reject contractors deemed to be unreliable. If, during the financial inspection, serious failings or contractual irregularities are found, the Commission may suspend payment of instalments on the project in question and not finance any further participation by the undertaking concerned until the inspection procedure has been completed. The contracting party concerned shall be debarred from further participation in Community research programmes. - information: Infodesks shall be set up to provide contractors from the Member States with information on programmes in the Community languages. Parliament calls on the Commission to use websites to provide comprehensive information concerning expressions of interest and invitations to tender and to take all necessary measures to facilitate access to the programme for SMEs and research centres (specific brochures and the setting up of an administrative assistance unit).