

Research RTD, 7th EC Framework Programme 2007-2013: trans-national Cooperation specific programme on policy-defined themes

2005/0185(CNS) - 21/09/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To establish a specific programme entitled “Co-operation” within the context of the EU’s 7th research framework programme.

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decisions

CONTENT: The European Commission is presenting five “specific programmes” in follow up to the approval of the 7th Framework Programme in April 2005. The first relates directly to actions funded under the Joint Research Centre. The other four are entitled: Co-operation, Ideas, Peoples and Capacity. The one under discussion here is the Co-operation specific programme.

Background:

The restructuring of the RT&D framework programmes is a bid by the European Commission to help the EU achieve its goal of becoming the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 and to help the EU realise its ambition of devoting 3% of GDP to RT&D by the same date. The specific programmes identified by the Commission have been designed to address major weaknesses in the level, quality and impact of European research. Their creation represents a further consolidation of the European Research Area by offering financial support to the free movement of ideas, knowledge and researchers. The re-structuring of the programmes includes a number of core innovations, including, for example, allowing researchers (under some actions) to identify topics for future funding. Other advances include the setting up of a Risk-Sharing Facility to improve access to EIB loans for large scale European actions and the establishment of a European Research Council. The Commission is also looking to overhaul the management methods of the framework programme by introducing improved efficiency drives through the externalisation of administrative tasks to an executive agency, seeking a clearer presentation of evaluation criteria, guaranteeing transparent work programmes and streamlining procedures for approving projects.

Specific programme – Co-operation:

The Co-operation programme has been designed to offer leadership in key scientific and technological fields. It does so by supporting co-operation between universities, industry, research centres and public authorities at a European as well as global level. Within this context, the Co-operation programme will provide trans-national collaboration and assistance at every level of the research phase. In short, the overarching aim of the specific programme is to promote research at the highest level of excellence through the exchange of ideas and research. There will be a strong accent on ethical considerations including the protection of human dignity and life, protection of personal data and privacy and environmental considerations in line with Community law.

Nine themes have been chosen to support this heading. They are: health, food, agriculture and biotechnology, information and communication technology, nano-sciences, nano-technologies, materials and new production technologies, energy, environment, transport, socio-economic sciences and humanities, security and space. The precise objective and approach of the nine themes are outlined in the Annexes. Pluri-disciplinary and cross-thematic research, including joint calls, will be encouraged. In order to make

them industrially relevant, the Commission is setting up “European Technology Platforms”, which will act as agents revising and updating emerging sciences. On the matter of emerging needs, the Commission is hoping that through specific support for research proposal, it will be able to help facilitate a more efficient system of targeted funding.

Within this context, the Commission is proposing the introduction of ‘bottom-up’ applications of presenting research proposals, whereby researchers, who have identified exciting research topics, can present them directly to the Commission for funding. These will be grouped under either ‘adventure’ or ‘insight’ actions. Another action, classified as ‘pathfinder’, allows the Commission to consider initiatives which focus on specific, highly challenging objectives in emerging scientific fields. In addition the Commission is offering the possibility of altering the annual work programme in cases where an unforeseen policy need has been identified – such as a sudden epidemic or an unexpected food scare.

A further key feature of the Co-operation programme is the successful application of knowledge transfer. It is widely recognised that translating successful research into either an economic or societal gain can be frustratingly slow. If the EU is serious in its bid to become a more dynamic and knowledge-based economy than the successful transfer of knowledge is considered crucial to the achievement of this objective. The Commission is therefore introducing a number of measures to help facilitate and encourage the dissemination of European research. This will be implemented in each thematic area by integrating and disseminating knowledge transfer actions within projects through, for example, financing schemes. Other proposed measures include offering dissemination actions, which actively seek to disseminate results from past, present and future research projects.

A further scheme being presented under the Co-operation programme is the Joint Technology Initiative. The Joint Technology Initiative responds to the need for long term public private partnership in certain fields of large-scale and on-going research activities. The research referred to here typically involves a small number of highly selective research fields. The European Investment Bank will be involved in offering loan finance. Funding for JTI will be decided on the basis of separate proposals and will be selected on the basis of a few key criteria. The initiatives must be able to prove that they offer added value for Europe as a whole, prove they have the support of industry, offer industrial competitive advantages, contribute to broader policy objectives and show national support. Scientific areas, which have already been identified as JTI compatible, include, *inter alia*, global environment monitoring, nano-electronics and embedded computing systems.

The co-ordination of non-Community research programmes is also listed as a key objective of the Co-operation programme. In this case the action makes use of two main tools, namely ERA-NET and the participation of the Community in jointly implemented national research programmes. Existing ERA-NET research from the 6th framework programme will be allowed to submit follow-up proposal or to broaden the consortia to new participants. In addition, the scheme will be opened to public bodies planning a research programme but which is not yet in operation. The action seeks to enhance synergies between the EU’s framework programme and inter-governmental structures such as EUREKA.

Lastly, the Co-operation specific programme will offer international co-operation in order to promote European competitiveness and to address specific problems faced by third world countries. International co-operation will be implemented according to each of the nine thematic fields of research. It will work by opening up all activities carried out in the thematic area and will co-ordinate with the other specific actions foreseen by the 7th framework programme – specifically under the heading “People” and “Capacities”.

For further information concerning the financial implications of this measure, please refer to the financial statement.

