

Research RTD, 7th EC Framework Programme 2007-2013: People specific programme for supporting the training and the career development of researchers

2005/0187(CNS) - 21/09/2005 - Legislative proposal

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

PROPOSED ACT: Council Decision

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 People 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 under the Ideas initiative. 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 – People:

The overall strategic aim of this programme is to make Europe more attractive to researchers. Not only will the policies of this programme seek to retain talented European researchers in Europe it will attempt to make Europe one of the most attractive destination for overseas researchers, by consolidating its training capacity and offering financial incentives. By this it means enhancing European research training, encouraging an active career path for researcher, encouraging knowledge sharing amongst the private and public sector and encouraging the strong participation of women in research.

The route to implement these ambitions will be the Marie Curie Actions. These actions have been subdivided into five areas, namely: Initial training, life-long training and career development, industry-academia partnerships, the international dimension and specific actions.

Under the heading, *initial training*, attention will be given to the first four years of a researchers' career, plus one additional year if deemed necessary for the completion of the initial training. Selection will be based on a trans-national network, the primary aim of which is to identify and define scientific research components. The networks will be expected to give particular attention to inter-disciplinary and newly emerging disciplinary research potential. The proposed training should focus on individual projects, complemented by training modules, which examine other related skills – such as management and financing. The involvement of outside organisations, preferably private, is considered essential in this action. In cases where all of the requirements have been met, the Community will offer support by recruiting early-stage researchers, setting up academic chairs or equivalent positions in enterprises, organising short training events such as summer schools and specialised training courses.

The focus of *life-long training and career development*, on the other hand, will be to target experienced researchers who are seeking to enhance their career prospects. The purpose of this action will be to offer researchers a leading and independent position either as a principal investigator, professor or else a senior position in the private sector. In addition it will help assist researchers to resume their work after a career break. To be eligible for funding under this heading, a researcher would need to have at least four years experience of conducting full-time research combined with a senior profile. The action will offer individual, intra-European, fellowships, which will be awarded at a Community level. They will be awarded to the best European and associated countries researchers. Other modules will include co-funding of regional, national or international programmes focused on training and career development. The programme will be awarded through an open, merit-based selection procedure. The selection procedure will be based on international peer review. Typical applicants for the co-funding modality would be those involved in building human resources in their respective countries and would include, for example, official public bodies responsible for funding fellowship programmes (such as ministries, research academies etc) as well as large research organisation and international bodies running comparable schemes.

The *industry/academia partnership* route, will seek to foster synergies between public research organisations, on the one hand, and private commercial enterprises on the other. Particular attention will be given to the integration of SME's under this heading. The Commission proposes implementing the action in a flexible way by offering co-operation programmes between the two sectors from at least two different Member States or associated States. Specifically speaking, Community support will focus on staff secondments, temporary hosting of experienced researchers, the organisation of workshops and conferences and, where necessary, offering SME's equipment needed for their participation in the scheme.

The *international dimension* action will focus on the career development of researchers from Member States and associated countries by supporting outgoing international fellowships, with a mandatory return policy, return and international re-integration grants for experienced researchers, offering fellowships to international researchers and seeking partnerships between European research organisations and one or more organisation in countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy or with which the EU has a Science and Technology Agreement.

Lastly, the creation of a genuine European research labour market is the main objective of the *specific actions*. Particular attention will be given to raising the overall awareness of the Marie Curie awards within the research community

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