

Research RTD, 7th EC Framework Programme 2007-2013: specific programme through direct activities by the Joint Research Centre JRC

2005/0184(CNS) - 21/09/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To establish a specific programme of direct actions for the Joint Research Centre (JRC) 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 relates to direct actions being funded under the Joint Research Centre 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 – Joint research Centre:

The main purpose of this Council Decision is the establishment of a specific programme for the “Joint Research Centre” under the 7th research framework programme. The JCR is a supporting body of the EU offering help to the EU institutions (specifically the European Commission) for the enactment and implementation of the research programmes. It provides scientific and technological support to users through a Work programme with roughly one hundred actions.

The objective of the proposed specific programme is to continue the JCR's work of providing customer-driven scientific and technical support for the EU policy making process. The JCR will be asked to implement and monitor existing EU policies as well as having to respond to new policy demands. Its activities are grouped around a number of policy themes. The first being “*Prosperity in a knowledge intensive society*”, whereby the JRC will seek to foster EU competitiveness through,

- Researching the production of internationally accepted references and the promotion of a common European measurement system. Other fields of research could include the safety of chemicals and cosmetic products, alternative (non-animal) testing, food safety and eEnergy. The JRC will collaborate closely with other national and international bodies, regulatory authorities and industry to achieve these objectives.
- Supporting evidence-based research policy-making at both EU and Member State level.
- Focusing on a smooth transition to less carbon intensive sources of energy as well as aiding the EU thematic strategy on air pollution.
- Supporting the formulation of Information Society Technology policies.
- Focusing research on Life Sciences and bio-technologies: In many respects controversial, the Commission, nevertheless, recognises that life sciences and bio-technologies can contribute significantly towards helping the EU become the most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010. As such the JRC is asked, *inter alia*, to focus on issues such as the provision of quality assurance tools for genetic testing, studies in genome-based diagnostic applications and studies assessing the impact of nano-technologies on the environment and public health. Significantly, the Council Decision specifically states that the JRC will NOT conduct research into human cloning for reproductive purposes, modifying the genetic heritage of human beings, creating human embryos solely for the purpose of research, for the purpose of stem-cell procurement or for somatic cell nuclear transfer. In addition all research activities that are prohibited in all the Member States will not receive funding under this specific programme.

The second policy theme is entitled “*Solidarity and the responsible management of resources*”, whereby the JRC is asked to support European policies for Rural Development, Agriculture and Fisheries around a core theme of sustainability. Research activities under the sub-heading of “Natural Resources”, will be based on a holistic approach and will be closely aligned to the EU’s seven thematic environmental strategies. More specifically, activities will concentrate on water management, soil protection initiatives, life-cycle analysis and forestry. The impact of climate change on the environment will also be given priority under this policy-heading.

The third policy theme is entitled “*Security and freedom*”, whereby the JRC will be asked to focus on applying IT systems to help in the fight against crime and fraud, smuggling and illicit trafficking, the protection of critical infrastructures, counter-terrorism measures and migration and border management. Technical support to integrated border management and its inter-operability will also be provided.

The fourth policy theme is entitled, “*Europe as a world partner*”. Under this heading, the JRC is expected to conduct research on global trade as well as instruments for stability and humanitarian aid. Thus, for example, the JRC will establish a global geo-spatial database and contribute to services supporting crisis management and the development of future GMES pilot services.

To conclude the JRC is expected to form links with research institutions across the EU as well as EU universities.

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