

Nuclear research: 7th framework programme

Euratom for nuclear research and training activities, 2007-2011

2005/0044(CNS) - 30/05/2006

The committee adopted the report by Jerzy BUZEK (EPP-ED, PL) broadly approving the proposed decision on the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) for nuclear research and training activities (2007-2011). It adopted a number of amendments under the consultation procedure:

- the indicative budget for the programme should be EUR 2 751 million rather than EUR 3 092, as proposed by the Commission. The committee amended the amounts earmarked for the individual programmes: (a) EUR 1 947 m rather than EUR 2 159 m for fusion energy research; (b) EUR 287 m rather than EUR 394 m for nuclear fission and radiation protection; and (c) EUR 517 m rather than EUR 539 m for nuclear activities of the Joint Research Centre;
- MEPs wanted the EU to exploit to the full the potential of fusion to contribute to a sustainable and secure energy supply "approximately fifty or sixty years from now", and said that a "fast track" to fusion energy should be pursued "in order to reduce as much as possible the time taken to develop an actual fusion power plant". They stipulated that the aim should be to create prototype reactors within thirty to thirty five years. Referring to the need for a full and effective exploitation of the ITER device, the committee wanted a bold accompanying programme and therefore specified that, within the amount foreseen for fusion energy research, not less than EUR 900 m should be reserved for that programme;
- to ensure that adequate human resources would be available, MEPs proposed the creation of a European PhD in "Physics and Engineering of Fusion";
- all the research activities carried out under the 7th framework programme should give priority consideration to safety aspects, and emphasis should be placed on preventing "human or organisational error (individual or collective)";
- the specific tasks of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) should go beyond helping to match the Kyoto objectives and instead should be related to global security, EU enlargement and energy supply. The JRC must also be given the means to modernise its infrastructures to keep European research at the forefront of its field. Lastly, the JRC's activities should also include "campaigning to make politicians and the public understand nuclear energy" as being an essential component of the energy mix needed to reduce fossil-fuel carbon emissions which are responsible for global warming.