

Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013)

2005/0043(COD) - 15/06/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament decided to postpone the adoption of a report by Jerzy **BUZEK** (EPP-ED, PL) and made some amendments to the Commission's proposal:

Budget: to bring the FP7 budget into line with the Financial Perspective, the maximum indicative overall EU funding for the seven-year programme should be EUR 50 862 million compared to the EUR 72 726 million originally proposed by the Commission. This is a substantial increase compared to the 6th Framework programme (running from 2002-2006), which had a budget of EUR 16 279 million. MEPs also modified the allocation of these funds among the different parts of the specific programmes.

Ethical questions: Parliament followed the line of the ITRE committee, saying that the research on the use of human stem cells, both adult and embryonic, may be financed, depending both on the contents of the scientific proposal and the legal framework of the Member State involved. This amendment was adopted with 284 votes in favour 249 against and 32 abstentions. This funding will depend on both the content of research projects and legislation in force in the member states, which will apply a very strict licensing regime to research institutes and bodies. As regards the use of human embryonic stem cells, institutions, organisations and researchers must be subject to strict licensing and control in accordance with the legal framework of the Member State involved. However, the FP7 must not finance research aimed at human cloning for reproductive purposes, research intended to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes inheritable or research intended to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Support for SMEs, young researchers and women: Parliament also emphasised the role of small and medium-sized enterprises in the FP7. Particular regard will be paid to ensuring adequate participation by SMEs, notably by aiming to allocate at least 15% of the Cooperation programme budget to SMEs. In order to meet this target, the participation of SMEs will be facilitated through strategic projects or clusters in connection with priority themes or European Technology Platform projects. European Technology Platforms (ETPs) are mechanisms to bring together all interested stakeholders to develop their respective Strategic Research Agendas and follow them up with concrete distribution of tasks among them. Parliament also wants to ensure that SMEs gain better access to pre-funding. If SME-specific instruments should become oversubscribed, MEPs want the financing of the various FP instruments to be reviewed with the aim of directing funds towards the instruments that are in demand. Members also introduce the new mechanism of "knowledge vouchers" for SMEs, to support the dissemination of knowledge.

Other amendments were adopted to encourage young researchers and support the early stages of their scientific careers, and to introduce measures to reduce the "brain drain" such as reintegration grants. Parliament said that special attention should be paid to facilitating the scientific career of junior, early-stage and early-career researchers, in the most productive period of life, to allow them to play a significant role in all seventh Framework Programme activities. Early -stage and early-career researchers should become a major driving force of science in Europe. Concrete measures must be undertaken in this regard in all activities under the "Cooperation", "Ideas" and "People" programmes. MEPs also want to see efforts to bring more women researchers into the programmes.

Review: Parliament started that the Commission will carry out at least two interim evaluations, one in 2009 and the other in 2011 based on empirical methodologies. The original Commission proposal had stated that one review would be carried out in 2010. Where appropriate, the Commission must propose modifications to the objectives and research activities in order to enhance their efficiency and effect and to take account of emerging fields of research. New funding instruments and rules for participation shall also be subject to an evaluation as to their simplicity and flexibility. The results of the evaluation, including the findings on the effectiveness of new actions and structures (especially the European Research Council and Joint Technology Initiatives) as well as the results of the simplification procedures, shall be presented. Prior to the commencement of the seventh Framework Programme, data necessary for a thorough impact assessment evaluation report will be identified, in order to ensure that consistent data methodologies are used to collate that information. The Commission shall also collate data detailing where funding under the seventh Framework Programme has been allocated across the EU.

Technology transfer: a new clause states that the following strategic lines will be supported by the programme: the European Research Area, SME involvement, private sector finance, policy-based research, complementarity with national policies, attracting and retaining researchers in the EU, and technology transfer. The Community will support technology transfer activities and contribute to bridging the gap between research and its commercialisation by providing finance to the European Investment fund to manage a "Technology Transfer Facility". Subject to conditions to be specified in the specific programmes and in the rules for participation, the facility will finance technology transfer activities of universities, research centres or other legal entities active in the field of technology transfer.

Priorities for financing under FP7: There are **eleven** themes determined for EU action, instead of nine as proposed by the Commission: the thematic area "Security and Space" should be split into two separate headings ("Security" and "Space"), and Parliament has added "Fisheries and sustainable exploitation of the oceans" to the existing themes.

Real autonomy for European Research Council: Parliament said that the ERC should initially be set up as an Executive Agency that will become an independent structure established under the procedure as laid down in Article 251 of the Treaty. It will consist of a scientific council and an administrative board. The scientific council will be supported by temporary scientific staff chosen by the scientific council members. For the initial transitional period the European Commission shall ensure that the implementation of the ERC is in accordance with the principles of scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency and transparency, and that it follows precisely the strategy and implementation methodology established by the Scientific Council. At the same time the Commission will take all the initiatives necessary, under the procedure as laid down in Article 251 of the Treaty, to implement the European Research Council as a permanent, legally and independent structure. The implementation and management of the ERC will be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis in order to assess its achievements and to adjust and improve procedures on the basis of experience. An independent review will be carried out by 2008 of the ERC's structures and mechanisms, against the criteria of scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency, accountability and transparency and with the full involvement of the Scientific Council. Following the evaluation, the structures and mechanisms of the ERC can be modified. The Commission will ensure that the necessary preparatory work is undertaken with a view to a transition to any modified structure required.

Finally, it should be noted that Parliament adopted a second report by Jerzy **BUZEK** on the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) for nuclear research and training activities (2007-2011). (Please see procedure reference CNS/2005/0044.)