

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

2005/0043(COD) - 25/09/2006 - Council position

The Council's common position reflects to a considerable extent both the proposal of the Commission and the opinion of the European Parliament as regards the structure, scientific and technological content, means of implementation of the Framework Programme as well as the financial amount and its indicative breakdown.

As regards the main amendments to the Commission proposal, these concern the following:

Ethical issues

The Council has agreed to the line suggested by the European Parliament in its first-reading opinion: rules with regard to ethics in the 7th research framework programme, and in particular with regard to embryonic stem-cell research, are now clearly set out in the text of Article 6 of the Framework Programme Decision. In addition, the Commission has made it clear that it will maintain the practice adopted during the sixth Framework Programme and excluding the activities of destroying human embryos, including for the procurement of stem cells, from Community financial support under the RTD framework programme.

Scientific and technological content

1) Cooperation

While broadly maintaining the Commission's proposal, the Council, in the light of the European Parliament's amendments, clarified and extended the scope of certain priorities:

- the number of priorities was increased from nine to ten, splitting security research away from space research;
- special attention will be paid to ensuring there is effective coordination between the thematic areas and priority scientific areas which cut across themes, such as forestry research, cultural heritage, marine sciences and technologies;
- in order to support research aiming at identifying or further exploring new scientific and technological opportunities in a given field, as well as in their combination with other relevant areas and disciplines, future and emerging technologies and unforeseen policy needs will be addressed in an open and flexible way, through specific support for spontaneous research proposals, including for joint calls, in order to nurture novel ideas and radically new uses and to explore new options in research roadmaps, in particular linked with a potential for significant breakthroughs;
- dissemination and transfer of knowledge will be prioritised in order to facilitate the use of results by industry, policy makers and society, with appropriate restrictions for the security theme due to the confidentiality aspects of its activities;

- particular attention will be paid to assure an adequate participation of SMEs. To this end, and following the anticipation of the European Parliament, the aim will be to enable at least 15% of the funding available under the "Cooperation" part of the programme to go to SMEs. The Council has not, however, approved the amendment of the European Parliament which stipulates the financing of European Technology Platforms with the aim of raising the SMEs participation, because it advocates a project based approach to reach this aim;

- concerning the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs), the Council accepted the European Parliament's amendment adding supplementary criteria as regards their set-up. Hence, the nature of JTIs must be clearly defined, in particular with regard to matters concerning financial commitments, duration of the commitment of the participants, rules for entering and exiting their contracts, and intellectual property rights.

First priority (Health): in response to concerns expressed by the European Parliament, a broader scope of research has been accepted, notably including postgenomic research; new preventive tools for regenerative medicine; new delivery approaches; modelling of complex systems; age-related illnesses including dementia; Hepatitis C and potentially newly emerging epidemics such as SARS; rheumatoid and musco-skeletal diseases; aspects of palliative medicine; patient safety and better use of medicine including aspects of pharmacovigilance and scientifically tested complementary and alternative medicines; research into health-care systems including home care strategies and assessing the cost, efficiency and benefits of different interventions; research on lifestyle and environmental factors and their interaction with medication;

Second priority (food, agriculture and biotechnology): the objective has been improved to include environmental challenges, aquaculture, coastal contexts and response to specific dietary needs of consumers. Activities have been widened to include bioinformatics, sustainable use of biodiversity, land-based biological resources including soil fertility, plant health, epidemiological studies, diseases linked to animal feedstuffs and other threats to the sustainability and security of food production including climate change;

Third priority (information and communication technologies): by building upon the amendments proposed by the European Parliament, this priority has been strengthened to include product, service and process innovation and creativity; reduction of digital divide and social exclusion; the needs of people with special needs including the ageing population; promotion of accessibility and transparency of governance and development processes; RTD management and communication; innovative high-value ICT based products and services; ICT research activity based on the 'open source' development model; various exploitation paths and business models as a result of ICT research; photonics; Free, Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS); sustainability issues in the field of electronics; exploitation of quantum effects; storage; mathematics; natural cooperation; improvement of health care provisions; health information space for knowledge management; ecological aspect of mobility; access to interactive digital content; accessibility and use over time of scientific resources and assets in multicultural environment; empowerment of small and medium-sized organisations and communities; traditional industries; and optimisation. In addition, and in contrast with the original Commission's proposal, the role of research into Future and Emerging Technologies has been moved to make it as integral part of all activities under this priority, not merely as a single activity under this priority.

Fourth priority (nano-sciences, nano-technologies, materials and new production technologies): the rationale has been broadened to include power generation, energy, ceramics and nano-medicine. Activities have been extended to include manufacture of basic materials and components; nano-metre precise components; monitoring and sensing; nano-composites; geo and optical technologies; footwear and steel.

Fifth priority (energy): the rational and activities have been strengthened to include identification of adequate and timely solutions for energy systems due to finite nature of conventional oil and natural gas reserves; affordable energy costs for citizens and industries; reference to both 2005 and 2006 Green Paper, Europe's world leadership in a number of energy generation and energy efficiency technologies; electricity production from wastes; production of fuels from biomass and waste; storage; distribution and use of carbon-neutral fuels, in particular biofuels for electricity generation; highly efficient and cost-effective power and/or heat generation plants with near zero emissions based on in particular underground storage; development and demonstration of other solid fuel conversion technologies producing also secondary energy carriers and liquid and gaseous fuels; development of energy storage options; further final and primary energy consumption savings for buildings and transport; the use of new and renewable energy technologies and energy demand management measures and devices; scientific support for policy development. In addition, concerning the polygeneration, it was found appropriate at this stage, due to limited resources, to integrate it under activity 'Energy efficiency and savings' and not as a separate activity as proposed by the European Parliament.

Sixth priority (environment, including climate change): the Council followed the line of the European Parliament by extending the objective to include climate and adaptation of environmental pressures, and the rational to include construction and fisheries, references to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Convention on Combat Desertification and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; as well as contribution of environmental technologies to sustainable consumption and production; natural heritage; and higher competitiveness while at the same time ensuring a more sustainable future for next generations. Activities have been broadened to include functioning of polar regions; global and regional interactions; atmosphere as part of interactions; effects of the sea level rise on coastal zones and impact on particularly sensitive areas; improvement of forecasting; droughts, forest fires, landslides, avalanches and other extreme events as part of climate disasters; impact of disasters related to geological hazards and climate; improvement of management strategies, also within a multi-risk approach; control of invasive alien species, lagoons; preservation of landscape; sustainable products; protection, conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, including human habitat; alternative testing strategies and in particular non-animal methods for industrial chemicals; third party assessment instruments; assessment, exploitation and management of natural resources; and differing scales of observation.

Seventh priority (transport, including aeronautics): this has been improved to include benefits for all citizens; transport's relevance on environment; interactions of vessels or infrastructures; interoperability and intermodality of waterborne transport; smaller size vehicles for different applications; innovative maintenance; repair and overhaul; accessible combinations of technologies; sustainable surface transport; transport applications such as hydrogen and fuel cells, taking into account cost-efficiency and energy-efficiency considerations; logistics; means of transport with lower levels of pollution; infrastructure maintenance; and EGNOS.

Eighth priority (socio-economic sciences and the humanities): this has been extended to include demographic change; definition of regulatory measures in cultural, scientific and technological areas, as well as in the area of gender equality; intangible goods; regional cohesion; socio-economic impact of European policies and legislation; reconciliation of professional and family life; disabilities issues; inequalities; ethnicity and religious pluralism; developing regions; peace fostering; future development of the enlarged EU; role of civil society; and dissemination of knowledge.

Ninth priority (space): the rationale has been broadened to incorporate forestry; health; technological spin-off effects and indispensability of space applications in a high-tech society; efficient exploitation of space assets in coordination with in-situ assets, including airborne assets; and cost-effective missions. Activities have been expended to include in-situ monitoring; support to the integration and harmonisation of GMES data (both satellite-based and in-situ, including ground based, shipborne and airborne);

development of space-based systems for risk prevention and risk management and all kinds of emergencies, enhancing convergence with non-space systems; maximisation of scientific added value through synergies with initiatives of ESA or national space agencies in the field of space exploration, and facilitation of access to this scientific data; coordination of efforts for the development of space-borne telescopes and detectors as well as for data analysis in space science; and bio-medicine.

Tenth priority (security): the objective has been improved to include natural disasters and privacy. The broadened rationale includes support to Community policy in the field of health, and the emphasis of the security research for European capabilities regarding surveillance, distribution of information and knowledge of threats and incidents as well as systems for better assessment and situation control through better use of common ICT-systems in the fields of different operations. Activities have been extended to include methods for rapid identification; restoration of safety in case of crisis; providence of an overview of, and support for diverse emergency management operations; security systems interconnectivity; intelligence, information gathering and civil security; mission oriented research related to cultural, social, political and economic dimensions of security, the role of human values and policy making, psychology and social environment of terrorism.

2) Ideas

The Council followed the line of the European Parliament by enabling a swift creation of the European Research Council (ERC), consisting of an independent scientific council and a dedicated implementing structure. It has also further extended the text to include that the management of the ERC will be carried out by staff recruited for that purpose and that it will cover only the real administrative costs; that representatives of the scientific council will ensure a diversity of the research fields and that they will be appointed for a period of four years, renewable once, on a basis of a rotating system; that the scientific council will also establish an overall scientific strategy, have full authority over decisions on the type of research to be funded, and also establish a code of conduct addressing, inter alia, the avoidance of conflicts of interest; that the administrative and staffing costs of the ERCS will be consistent with lean and cost-effective management; that the Commission will ensure that the ERC will act in accordance with the principles of scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency and transparency, and draw up an annual report on the ERC's operations and realisation of the objectives and submit it to the European Parliament and the Council. However, the Council has decided for a more flexible approach than the European Parliament as regards the ERC's structure. A structure based on an Executive Agency will, therefore, be decided only after the interim evaluation of the Framework Programme, foreseen for no later than 2010.

3) People

The Council has agreed upon large majority of the European Parliament's amendments and has, therefore, further improved the text to include building on the experience with the "Marie Curie" actions under previous Framework programmes and their impact on the European Research Area; training specifically intended for young people; increased participation of women researchers; open European labour market for researchers free from all forms of discrimination; special measures to encourage early-stage researchers and support early stage of scientific careers, as well as measures to reduce 'brain drain'; encouragement of centres of excellence around the European Union; synergies with other Community policies; broadening of scientific and generic skills, including those relating to technology transfer and entrepreneurship;

4) Capacities

In the light of the European Parliament's amendments, the Council further clarified and extended the scope of certain activities, as follows:

- in the "**research infrastructures**" activity, the objective has been extended to include contribution to the development of the European Research Area. Activities have been broadened to include access to high performing research infrastructures also from researchers from industry and SMEs; evolution and development of global connectivity; open standards for interoperability; potential of scientific excellence of the convergence regions and outermost regions for new infrastructures. As regards the criteria for funding, the Council extended the list to include contribution to technological development capacity, contribution to developing 'research based clusters of excellence', and possibility to use EIB loans and Structural funds;

- in the "**research for the benefit of SMEs**" activity, the Council has followed the line of the European Parliament to include bridging the gap between research and innovation; enhancing the exploitation of research; research providers; complementarity with the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme as well as with other Community programmes; support to national exploratory awards;

- in the "**regions of knowledge**" activity, the Council extended the scope to include facilitation of the emergence and creation of regional clusters which contribute to the development of the European Research Area; support to emerging Regions of Knowledge; relationship with Structural Funds; and synergy with the Community and relevant national and regional programmes;

- in the "**research potential**" activity, the activities have been clarified to include synergies with the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme in order to promote the regional commercialisation of R&D in collaboration with industry;

- in the "**science and society**" activity, the Council has broadened the activities to include measures to make scientific publications more accessible to members of the public wishing to consult them; promotion of the role of women in research and in scientific decision-making bodies; creation of an open environment which triggers curiosity for science in young people; promotion of full participation of young people in science; improved inter-communication and mutual understanding between the scientific world and the wider audience; better presentation of scientific work; support to scientific publications;

- in the "**activities of international cooperation**", the Council has provided that activities, currently undertaken by INTAS which will be wound up by the end of 2006, will be subsumed in this programme as well as in the specific programmes "Cooperation" and "People". It has also extended the objective to include facilitation of contacts with partners in third countries with the aim of providing better access to research carried out elsewhere in the world; and the activities part to include specific cooperation actions of mutual interest.

5) Non-nuclear actions of the Joint Research Centre

The Council clarified the rationale to include coordination of actions under this part with the research undertaken under the "Themes" of the "Cooperation" Specific Programme with the aim of avoiding overlap and duplication. Activities have been extended to include scientific/technical support to the development of risk assessment and management procedures as a tool for the European decision making process; expertise and role in the GMES research activities and in the development of new applications in this field; and development and validation of alternative strategies, and in particular non-animal methods, in all relevant research areas.

Overall amount and breakdown of funds

Following the conclusion of the Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and sound financial management, the originally proposed budget for the 7th Framework Programme of EUR 72 726 million had to be reduced while

aiming to maintain appropriate focus and critical mass. The Council has maintained the **Commission's amended proposal** for the maximum overall amount of **EUR 50 521 million**, in accordance with the European Parliament's opinion. The Council has however proposed adjustments to the breakdown of this figure, as follows:

- As regards "**Cooperation**", the Council has followed the line of the European Parliament's amendments to increase the funding for the thematic themes which have a great potential for improving European competitiveness, in particular as regards the first (health), the fifth (energy) and the eighth priority (socioeconomic sciences and the humanities), but not to the same extent. Following the split of the "security and space" theme into two separate priorities, the Council decided to earmark EUR 80 million less for security than for space because it considers that Community competences in this area maintain very limited;

- With regard to "**Capacities**", the Council followed the line taken by the European Parliament to cut the proposed funding for "research infrastructures" and instead substantially increase the funding for "research for the benefit of SMEs".

- Concerning the "**Ideas**" and "**People**", the Council has kept the funding as proposed by the Commission, and hence didn't follow the European Parliament's amendments which increased the funding for both parts of the Framework Programme at the expense of cutting the funding earmarked for "Capacities".

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