

Research RTD, 7th EC Framework Programme 2007-2013: specific programme "Ideas", frontier research

2005/0186(CNS) - 19/12/2006 - Final act

PURPOSE: to adopt the Specific Programme "Ideas" under the 7th Framework Programme.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Council Decision concerning the specific programme "Ideas" implementing the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013).

CONTENT: the adoption of the Specific Programme "Ideas" stems from Council Decision 1982/2006/EC concerning the Seventh Framework Programme (2007-2013). See: [COD/2005/0043](#). The new 7th Framework Programme is centred on four research pillars: Co-operation; Ideas; People; and Capacity.

Possibly one of the most innovative of the five specific programmes, the Ideas Specific Programme seeks to address the growing realisation within Europe that it is failing to deliver the kind of outstanding research required if it is to become the most competitive, knowledge based economy in the world by 2010. The aim of the Ideas programme, therefore, is to provide a pan-European mechanism to support truly creative scientists, engineers and scholars, whose curiosity and thirst for knowledge will result in unpredictable and spectacular discoveries. A key term linked to the Ideas programme is "frontier research". This term reflects the fact that basic research is an intrinsically risky endeavour involving the pursuit of fundamental advances in science and technology without regard for established disciplinary boundaries or national borders. The Programme has been awarded a **EUR 7 510 million** budget to help realise these objectives.

In order to enact its objective of creating a frontier driven research community, the programme will follow an investigator driven approach whereby researchers will be given the freedom to choose the scope of their own topics. Grants will be provided for individual teams, leaving the flexibility for a team to consist of any grouping of researchers appropriate for the conduct of the projects – from one single institution or several institutions. The scope for funding could include engineering, socio-economic sciences and humanities.

Heading up and investigating the proposed research topics will be the European Research Council. Its establishment represents a new departure for the EU and will consist of two arms. Firstly, an independent Scientific Council and secondly a dedicated implementing structure. To make it effective, the ERC will operate according to the principles of trust, credibility and transparency. It should guarantee a high degree of autonomy and integrity, while being consistent with the requirements for accountability. Further, the ERC is expected to act independently of any political or any other vested interests.

Concerning the first branch of the ERC, the Scientific Council, it will be made up of European scientists, recruited from the highest echelons of the scientific community. They will be appointed by the European Commission following an independent procedure in which their credibility is verified. The Council will be mandated to develop a scientific strategy for the programme. A number of factors must be taken into account when preparing the scientific strategy including: identifying Europe's specific needs, the establishment of a work programme, (which can be, if necessary modified), preparing calls for proposals, setting criteria and defining specific topics for research. Criteria will be based on the conclusions of peer reviewed evaluations, which in turn will form the basis on which proposals will be funded.

Concerning the second branch of the European Research Council, namely the dedicated implementation structure, it will be responsible for the programmes' execution in accordance with the annual work programme. The implementation structure will be headed up by an Executive Agency, which will oversee the implementation of evaluation procedures, peer reviews, the selection process in accordance with the principles set out by the Scientific Council and the management of financial grants.

The European Commission will act as guarantor of the ERC's full autonomy and integrity as well as ensuring that the Ideas programme is executed according to the scientific objectives set out by the programme. As a general rule, the Commission will adopt the work programme as proposed by the Scientific Council. Should the Commission fail to adopt the work programme; its reasons will be stated publicly.

During the implementation of this Specific Programme and in the research activities arising from it, fundamental ethical principles must be respected including, *inter alia*, the principles reflected in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU; the protection of human dignity and human life, the protection of personal data and privacy, as well as of animals and the environment in accordance with Community law and international conventions, guidelines and codes of conduct.

ENTRY INTO FORCE: 2 January 2007.