Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Council Regulation setting up the Clean Sky Joint Undertaking'

COM(2007) 315 final — 2007/0118 (CNS)

(2008/C 44/04)

On 11 July 2007 the Council decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 95 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

On 10 July 2007, the Bureau of the European Economic and Social Committee decided to ask the Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption to carry out the work on the subject.

In view of the urgency of the matter, at its 439th plenary session held on 24 and 25 October 2007 (meeting of 25 October), the European Economic and Social Committee appointed Mr Dantin as its rapporteur-general and adopted the following opinion by 97 votes in favour, with three abstentions.

1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

1.1 The Committee welcomes the decision on setting up the Clean Sky Joint Undertaking. It considers that this approach to relaunching investment in R&D by means of public/private financing has the potential to give European businesses a stable frame of reference and making it possible to overcome the current fragmentation of Community financing and coordinate research, which is often too widely dispersed, thereby helping to make it more effective.

1.2 It welcomes the choice of this sector, which, at the same time as tying in with the Lisbon strategy, gives a new impetus to a technically innovative industry which generates large numbers of highly skilled jobs, and also contributes to much-needed progress in terms of environmental protection.

1.3 In welcoming the proposal under discussion, the EESC wishes firstly to emphasise the importance for the EU of the proposed strategy in terms of promoting investment and coordinating research. In so doing, the Committee feels that the strategy strongly supports the creation of a European research area and significantly contributes to the competitiveness of European businesses in the sector.

1.4 However, in view of the multiplicity of sources of funding, the number of stakeholders, and the substantial Community resources involved, it is clear that the use and ownership of the final products of the research should be better defined, particularly with regard to intellectual property rights and patents.

1.5 Finally, the Committee's feels that the following measures are necessary:

— genuine simplification of procedures, particularly in view of the negative impact of red tape on the previous R&D programmes. As these procedures are currently being worked out, the Committee will pay close attention to the need to enable all parties to participate in the choice of objectives and analysis of final results;

— an information campaign to help mobilise the requisite economic resources;

— the establishment of appropriate vocational training programmes to ensure that the skills of workers match the jobs created by Clean Sky, with the aim of creating the necessary conditions for providing industrial leadership in this strategic sector.

2. **Introduction**

2.1 The purpose of the proposed Council Regulation is to launch one of the very first public-private partnerships in the area of R&D. It defines one of the first Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs). This initiative is the field of aeronautics and air transport and is entitled 'CLEAN SKY'.

2.2 The general aim of JTIs is to allow industry, research organisations, Member States and the Commission to pool some or all of their resources into selected research programmes.

2.3 Unlike the traditional strategy, which involves providing public funding for projects on a case-by-case basis, JTIs involve large-scale research programmes with shared strategic research goals. This new approach is expected to create a critical mass for European research and innovation, consolidate the scientific community in key strategic areas, and harmonise the funding of projects so that research findings can be put to use more quickly. JTIs are aimed at key areas where the current instruments have neither the scale nor the speed to keep Europe ahead of global competition. These are areas where national, European and private funding of research could bring significant added value, inter alia by stimulating an increase in private R&D expenditure.

2.4 The main purpose of the JTI in the field of aeronautics and air transport, known as 'Clean Sky', is to speed up the development of clean air transport technologies in the EU so that they can be brought into operation as quickly as possible. In addition to the requirement of maintaining the sector's competitiveness, these technologies should also help to achieve strategic European environmental and social priorities, in combination with sustainable economic growth.

3. **Context and general considerations**

3.1 Given that air traffic is forecast to double over the next twenty years, and that the development of an environment-friendly transport system for both passengers and freight is an essential element in ensuring European economic and social growth, the programme is necessary and justified.

3.2 The decision to act at European level seems appropriate, given that action by stakeholders at Member State level is not so well supported in terms of economic resources and scientific know-how.

3.3 It is crucial for Member States to participate directly, both in order to mobilise financing and because numerous decisions will continue to be taken at national level, with regard both to calls for participation in programmes, ongoing monitoring of all phases of programmes and evaluation of results.

3.4 The aeronautical sector will soon be facing major challenges, such as the environmental impact, which could hold back its development.

3.5 Limiting the impact of aviation on climate change and reducing noise pollution are absolute priorities. In view of this, achieving the reductions envisaged by Community legislation requires major technological changes to be implemented in the near future. (In its Strategic Research Agenda, the European Technology Platform for Aeronautics — ACARE — has set the objectives for 2020 of reducing CO_2 emissions by 50 %, NO_x emissions by 80 % and noise pollution by 50 %).

3.6 The European aeronautics industry, which currently provides three million jobs in Europe, is also facing fierce competition as a result of the public investment carried out in other geographical areas, and the United States in particular, where the resources allocated to research in this sector are three times higher than those currently available in Europe.

3.7 Public investment is also important given that the sector is characterised by a slow return on investment, with potential scope for market failure on account of lack of investment in aeronautical R&D.

3.8 The choice of aeronautics and air transport in the Specific Programme 'Cooperation' (cf. point 4.3) is motivated by a concern to improve the health and quality of life of present and future generations by reducing the environmental impact of aircraft, improving air quality at local level and limiting noise in areas surrounding airports, as well as improving travelling conditions for passengers.

4. **The Commission's proposal**

4.1 The proposed Regulation setting up the Clean Sky Joint Undertaking [COM(2007) 315] arises out of the provisions of the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) covered by Decision 1982/2006/EEC. This provides for a Community contribution towards the establishment of long-term public-private partnerships at European level in the area of research.

4.2 These partnerships take the form of Joint Technology Initiatives (JTI) and arise from the work of the former European Technology Platforms (ETP).

4.3 The Council, in its Decision No 971/2006/EEC on the Specific Programme 'Cooperation', emphasised the need to set up public-private partnerships and identified six areas in which the creation of joint technology initiatives is appropriate with a view to relaunching European research. These are:

— Hydrogen cells and fuel cells;

— **Aeronautics and air transport**;

— Innovative medicines ([1]);

— Embedded computing systems ([2]);

— Nanoelectronics ([3]);

— GMES (global monitoring for environment and security).

4.4 In the context of this general strategy, the Regulation proposed in COM(2007) 315 final provides for the implementation of the Joint Technology Initiative (JTI) on aeronautics and air transport by means of setting up a Clean Sky Joint Undertaking.

4.5 The objectives of the Clean Sky Joint Undertaking are explained clearly and in detail in Article 3 of the Statutes set out in the Annex to the Regulation under discussion. These objectives cover a wide and ambitious range of activities, summarised in Article 3 of the Regulation:

— accelerating in the EU the development of clean Air Transport technologies for earliest possible deployment;

([1]) CESE 1184/2007 (INT/363).
([2]) CESE 1185/2007 (INT/364).
([3]) R/CESE 1199/2007 (INT/370).

— creating a radically innovative Air Transport System based on advanced technologies, with the target of reducing the environmental impact of air transport through reduction of noise and gaseous emissions, and improvement of the fuel economy of aircraft.

4.5.1 Clean Sky therefore ensures integration and coordination of various research activities while tapping into economies of scale. It will be developed around six technological fields referred to as Integrated Technology Demonstrators (ITDs), namely:

— smart fixed wing aircraft;

— green regional aircraft;

— green rotorcraft;

— green and sustainable engine;

— systems for green operations;

— eco-design.

The technological objectives for each ITD have already been set.

4.6 The Clean Sky joint undertaking is to be considered as an international body with a legal personality within the meaning of Article 22 of Directive 2004/17/EC and Article 15 of Directive 2004/18/EC. Its seat will be in Brussels and its activities will cease in December 2017, unless extended by Council decision.

4.7 *Legal basis*

4.7.1 The proposal consists of a Council Regulation with the statutes of the joint undertaking in an annex. It is based on Article 171 of the Treaty. The joint undertaking is to be a Community body, and although its budget falls under Article 185 of Council Regulation 1605/2002, it will have to take account of the specifics of this initiative in that it involves public-private partnerships with a large private-sector contribution at least equal to that of the public sector.

4.8 *Members*

The following are to be founding members of the Clean Sky Joint Undertaking:

— the European Community represented by the Commission;

— 12 ITD leaders and up to 74 Associates, subject to the membership rules set out in Article 2 of the Statutes in the Annex to the Regulation under discussion;

— any public or private entity established in a Member State or in a country associated to the Seventh Framework Programme may apply to become a member of the joint undertaking, provided that: as ITD Leaders, they commit themselves to contribute resources proportional to and consistent with the overall JTI activities; as Associates, their commitment is proportional to the budget of the ITD they participate in and consistent with the ITD requirements.

4.9 *Sources of financing*

4.9.1 The running cost of the Clean Sky Joint Undertaking are to be shared equally in cash between on the one hand the European Community, and on the other hand the rest of the Members, each side contributing 50 %.

4.9.2 The maximum Community contribution to the Clean Sky Joint Undertaking covering running costs and research activities is EUR 800 million, paid from the budget appropriation allocated to the Theme 'Transport' of the Specific Programme 'Cooperation' implementing the Seventh Framework Programme according to the provisions of Article 54 of Council Regulation No 1605/2002.

5. **General and specific comments**

5.1 The Committee welcomes the decision on setting up the Clean Sky Joint Undertaking arising out of the provisions of the 7th Framework Programme. It believes that relaunching investment in R&D is an appropriate way of giving European businesses a stable frame of reference in the form of a new instrument that makes it possible to overcome the current fragmentation of Community financing and avoids a wide range of thinly-spread programmes that made it almost impossible to evaluate results.

5.2 The initiative is consistent with EU policies and objectives and ties in with the approach set out in the Lisbon strategy with its emphasis on knowledge and innovation in the Community supporting growth and employment. It includes measures relating to the EU Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) and should be conducive to major progress in implementing the Strategic Research Agenda of ACARE on the environment.

5.3 The EESC considers that the Clean Sky undertaking, which like the other JTIs arising from the Seventh Framework Programme is based on a public-private partnership, provides a solid basis for the creation of a European research area and a major contribution to the competitiveness of European businesses.

5.4 In welcoming the proposal under discussion, the EESC must firstly underline the importance for the EU of the strategy being proposed for investment and coordination of research.

5.5 However, in the light of the multiple financing system that has been set up and of the significant volume of Community resources involved, the EESC believes that it would be appropriate to better define the use and allocation of the end products of the research in question. To this end, the issue of patents and intellectual property as defined in Article 20 of the regulation, which limits itself to setting out principles, ought to be more precise and more explicit, lest it become a sticking point in the implementation and running of the Clean Sky JTI.

5.6 However, to achieve its aims and to maximise the potential that this new instrument offers, the EESC considers the following to be necessary:

— a genuine simplification of procedures at every stage of the various R&D activities, from the selection of activities to the distribution of results, by giving Clean Sky the main responsibility for these tasks. Administrative complexity and the uncertainty over funding and institutional references were some of the causes of the past failures of previous R&D programmes;

— a wide-ranging information programme on the opportunities provided by the Clean Sky undertaking, inter alia on its ability to mobilise the necessary economic resources in the light of the new forms of financing;

— the establishment of appropriate vocational training programmes to create a highly-skilled workforce with the knowledge needed for the R&D supported by Clean Sky, which will be highly strategic for the EU's industrial future. These high-level qualifications will provide the technical skills needed for the R&D jobs that will be created, will serve to slow the brain drain, and will provide one of the necessary conditions for ensuring leadership in these sectors, which are of strategic importance from both an industrial and an environmental perspective.

Brussels, 25 October 2007.

The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee
Dimitris DIMITRIADIS

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Council Regulation setting up the ENIAC Joint Undertaking'

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On 10 September 2007 the Council decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 95 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

On 10 July 2007, the Bureau of the European Economic and Social Committee decided to ask the Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption to carry out the work on the subject.

In view of the urgency of the matter, at its 439th plenary session held on 24 and 25 October 2007 (meeting of 25 October), the European Economic and Social Committee appointed Mr Dantin as its rapporteur-general and adopted the following opinion by 106 votes in favour, with one abstention.

1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

1.1 The Committee welcomes the decision on setting up the ENIAC joint undertaking ([1]).

1.1.1 It considers that this approach to relaunching investment in R&D by means of public/private financing has the potential to give European businesses a stable frame of reference and making it possible to overcome the current fragmentation of Community financing and coordinate research, which is often too widely dispersed, thereby helping to make it more effective.

1.2 It welcomes the choice of this sector. This is a technically innovative branch of industry, with strong potential for the future and as a source of highly skilled jobs, and developing it will directly contribute to achieving the Lisbon objectives on competitiveness and the Barcelona objectives on percentage of GDP allocated to research, and also to other Community policies, for example on the environment, transport, energy and health.

([1]) ENIAC = European Nanoelectronic Initiative Advisory Council. ENIAC was also the first computer manufactured using electronic components (1945-1946).