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(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES

COUNCIL

Council conclusions concerning joint programming of research in Europe in response to major societal challenges

(2009/C 24/04)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

- its resolution on CREST (28 September 1995) ⁽¹⁾, which authorises this committee in particular to ‘promote the coordination by the Community and the Member States of their R & D activities in order to ensure mutual consistency between the national policies and Community policy’,
 - its resolutions on the creation of the European area of research and innovation (15 June 2000) and on the realisation of the European Research Area: orientations for EU action in the field of research (2002-2006) (16 November 2000),
 - its conclusions on progress accomplished in the development of the European Research Area and on providing a new momentum (26 November 2002),
 - the Commission Green Paper on ‘The European Research Area: New Perspectives’,
 - its conclusions on the future of science and technology in Europe (23 November 2007),
 - its conclusions on the Commission communication ‘A European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET Plan) — Towards a low-carbon future’ (28 February 2008),
 - its conclusions on the launch of the ‘Ljubljana process’ — realisation of the European Research Area (30 May 2008),
 - its conclusions concerning ‘A common commitment by the Member States to combat neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer’s’ (26 September 2008),
 - its Key Issues Paper (KIP) for 2008: Contribution of the Competitiveness Council to the Spring European Council (25 February 2008), in which Member States and the Commission were encouraged to continue developing initiatives for joint programming of research in areas suited to such an approach, allowing a more strategic and better structured approach to the launch of new joint programmes and common calls for projects,
 - the conclusions of the European Council of 13 and 14 March 2008, which launched the new cycle of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs (2008-2010) and which, with the aim of fully developing the potential for innovation and creativity of European citizens, confirmed that particular attention should be given to further initiatives for joint programming of research;
1. RECOGNISES that, in the context of globalisation and the intensification of global competition, there has been a growing awareness in Europe of the existence of common societal challenges which no Member State is capable of resolving alone. Certain issues related to, for example, climate change, the ageing of the population, energy, water or food supplies, banking finances and security ⁽²⁾ are now of such a magnitude that Europe needs to elaborate a stronger, better coordinated, more coherent and more global response to these challenges;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 264, 11.10.1995, p. 4.⁽²⁾ This list is without prejudice to themes for joint programming, which will be chosen at a later stage.

2. RECALLS the large volume of public resources committed to research and innovation in the various Member States, including at regional level, and UNDERLINES the need for and the potential of scientific, financial and human resources for increased cooperation between Member States, through the implementation of common initiatives aimed at addressing major societal challenges, in order to strengthen Europe's capacity to transform the results of its research into tangible benefits for society and for the overall competitiveness of its economy;
3. UNDERLINES the important role of the Community Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP) and the related instruments, such as ERA-NET, ERA-NET + and the initiatives under Article 169, in mobilising Member States' scientific and financial resources for implementing R & D initiatives of common interest, and ENCOURAGES their continued use in the context of joint responses to tackle major societal challenges;
4. RECOGNISES also the importance of existing activities aimed at coordinating programmes conducted by national agencies and research organisations in several Member States, including at regional level, and by international organisations, as well as other cross-border and intergovernmental initiatives in this context (EUREKA, COST); and ENCOURAGES their continued use;
5. RECOGNISES that in addition to the existing regional, national, intergovernmental and Community instruments to pool or coordinate national R & D efforts, there is an increasing need for a new and more strategic approach. This approach should be based on the joint identification of societal challenges of common interest and a strengthened political commitment by Member States to produce common or concerted responses, in order to increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of public R & D funding in Europe;
6. In this context, WELCOMES the concept and objectives of joint programming as formulated in the communication of the Commission 'Towards joint Programming research: Working together to tackle common challenges more effectively', which calls for the implementation of a process led by the Member States to step up their cooperation in the R & D area in order to better confront major societal challenges of European or worldwide scale, where public research plays a key role;
7. UNDERLINES that, while fully recognising the competence of Member States and regions over their choice of research and innovation policies and related allocation of resources, the participation of Member States and FP associated countries in joint programming should be carried out on voluntary basis and according to the principle of variable geometry and open access. The participation in joint programming should also be based on scientific excellence and full utilisation of the research potential of its members;
8. ENCOURAGES Member States, with the support of the Commission, to consider how best to address the following issues during the development and implementation of joint programming:
 - a coherent approach on the peer review procedures,
 - a coherent approach for foresight activities and for evaluation of joint programmes,
 - a coherent approach to funding of cross-border research by national or regional authorities,
 - effective measures to ensure the optimum dissemination and use of research findings, *inter alia* via common practices for the protection, management and sharing of intellectual property rights,
 - involvement of the various scientific and, where appropriate, industry communities;
9. CONSIDERS that the following criteria should help identify joint programming themes:
 - there is a sufficient and effective commitment of Member States concerned,
 - the theme addresses a European or global challenge and is sufficiently focused so that clear and realistic objectives can be laid down and followed up,
 - it brings a clear added value to overall current research financed from national and Community public funds, as regards both economies of scale and better thematic coverage,
 - relevant regional, national and European stakeholders, including where appropriate the private sector besides scientific communities and funding agencies, have been involved in developing the theme,
 - a joint programming approach has the potential of translating the output of good public research into benefits for European citizens and European competitiveness, and of increasing the efficiency and impact of public R & D financing by involving the key public initiatives in the area;
10. ASKS Member States to collaborate in a dedicated configuration of CREST (hereinafter referred to as 'High Level Group for Joint Programming' or GPC) to identify, in accordance with the mandate in the annex, the themes for joint programming chosen following broad public consultation of the different regional, national and European scientific communities, and of the private sector where appropriate.

Taking account of the framework conditions laid down in paragraph 8, each thematic proposal presented to GPC by one or more of its members should include preliminary suggestions concerning a common vision, the governance and implementation of joint programming initiatives. GPC should evaluate each thematic proposal for joint programming on the basis of the criteria laid down in paragraph 9;

11. ASKS GPC to identify and substantiate the first list of a limited number of joint programming themes in due time; and INVITES the Commission, within the remit of its competence, to submit a proposal for a Council Recommendation in preparation for the launch of joint programming initiatives which correspond to the themes identified by the GPC, together with the state of play of research in the field of each of these themes, so that the Council is able to adopt joint programming initiatives no later than 2010;
 12. UNDERLINES that joint programming is a process led by Member States, and that the Commission's role is to facilitate the process of identification and provide support as necessary;
 13. In this context, EMPHASISES the need to analyse the relevance and the potential of existing regional, national, Community and intergovernmental instruments for meeting the identified societal challenges, and INVITES the Commission to carry out such an examination in close cooperation with the other stakeholders and provide input on the most appropriate instruments to meet these challenges;
 14. CONSIDERS it necessary to launch a pilot joint programming initiative on combating neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's, and INVITES the Commission to submit a proposal for a Council Recommendation in preparation for the launch of this pilot initiative as soon as possible in 2009;
 15. CONSIDERS that all procedures concerning joint programming of European research must be examined within the framework of the general approach to optimise the governance of the European Research Area, as provided by the Ljubljana Process;
 16. INVITES CREST to report, in the context of these conclusions, to the Council on joint programming every two years: the first report is expected in 2010.
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ANNEX

Mandate of the High Level Group on Joint Programming (GPC)

1. GPC:
 - (a) is a dedicated configuration of CREST composed of high-level representatives of the Member States and of the Commission and, where appropriate, associated countries;
 - (b) will be chaired by the representative of the Presidency-in-office of the Council;
 - (c) will be responsible for identifying according to a continuous process the possible themes for joint programming selected following broad consultation of the different regional, national and European scientific communities as well as, where appropriate, other public and private stakeholders mentioned in paragraph 10;
 - (d) in this framework, will be responsible for evaluating each proposal submitted to it on the basis of the criteria in paragraph 9;
 - (e) will contribute to the preparation of the debates and decisions of the Competitiveness Council on joint programming, within the mandate of CREST and without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Committee of Permanent Representatives;
 - (f) will initiate the consideration of issues referred to in paragraph 8.
 2. The Commission will support the work of GPC within the remit of its competence.
 3. The Member States will nominate their representatives at meetings of GPC before the end of January 2009.
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