

SENATE OF THE REPUBLIC

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RESOLUTION OF THE 10TH STANDING COMMITTEE *(Industry, Trade, Tourism)*

(Rapporteurs: Senators COLLINA and GIOTTO)

Approved at the session of 4 February 2014
ON THE

PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION ON THE FUEL CELLS AND HYDROGEN 2 JOINT UNDERTAKING (COM(2013) 506 FINAL)

Pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure of the Senate

Forwarded to the President of the Senate's Office on 6 February 2014

The Committee, having examined, pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure of the Senate, the Proposal for a Council Regulation on the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen 2 Joint Undertaking (COM(2013) 506 final),

whereas

the objective of the Proposal in question is to prolong the Joint Undertaking in the field of Fuel Cells and Hydrogen, which was launched under the Seventh Framework Programme, in line with the Communication from the European Commission on public-private partnerships in the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 'Horizon 2020';

and a joint undertaking in the field of fuel cells and hydrogen is needed in order to address two key challenges for the European Union, namely, to ensure the security of energy supply and to promote sustainable energy and transport, as well as to support industry in the field of research and development,

therefore, makes the following comments:

The 'Fuel Cells and Hydrogen 2' Joint Undertaking has the added benefit that it promotes the pooling of human, material and economic resources to work towards common objectives, which are shared across Europe. In this way, industrial investments are targeted at production and research systems that aim to change, innovate and convert methods of energy production and fossil fuel use towards renewable resources, to allow Europe to keep up with its main global competitors.

Hydrogen and fuel cell technologies belong to the group of energy sectors that are considered priorities in terms of the objectives of growth and development that the EU has considered necessary to achieve by 2020, and the structure of the Joint Undertaking allows bureaucratic procedures to be streamlined and the time needed to deliver research and development funding to be reduced.

However, the text of the proposed regulation does not provide a clear definition of the scope of assistance with regard to medium- and long-term basic research and it is not clear whether it will be possible to apply for funds where results of applied research are expected later than the target date of 2020. To this end, we hope that the European legislator will explain whether basic research, and not just applied research, is covered by the Joint Undertaking, considering that such research is necessary and sensible in order to maintain the level of innovation in European industry at a high level. Once this matter has been clarified and in the case that basic research does not fall within the scope of action of the Joint Undertaking, we should plan to make diversified funding available, in order to enable long-term studies to be carried out in several fields such as energy, transport and biotechnology, fields in which basic research on fuel cells and hydrogen has been hitherto excluded.

The Fuel Cells and Hydrogen 2 Joint Undertaking takes as a starting point the scientific bases and results achieved from its first edition, which created a strong partnership capable of attracting public and private funding with a significant commitment from industry. The fuel cells and hydrogen field, although advanced from a research point of view, is still weak and there is a long way to go from the design phase to full implementation on a large scale. For this reason, we hope that the Italian Government will follow the driving force created by the European Union and create its own national platform, as already exists in other Member States, for the development of fuel cell and hydrogen technology, in order to provide guidance on the priorities of the Italian system as a whole; this will help to develop an

infrastructure that is able to compete on the international market with highly technological and innovative Italian products and to focus operators, investors and researchers on strategic business and scientific lines.