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RESOLUTION OF THE 7th STANDING COMMITTEE

(Education, heritage, scientific research, entertainment and sport)

(Rapporteur: Senator POSSA)

adopted at the session of 11 April 2012

ON THE

**PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION ON THE RESEARCH AND
TRAINING PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN ATOMIC ENERGY
COMMUNITY (2014-2018) COMPLEMENTING THE HORIZON 2020 – THE
FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
(COM(2011) 812 FINAL) (NO 83)**

pursuant to Article 144(1) and (6) of the Rules of Procedure

Sent to the Prime Minister's Office on 17 April 2012

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The Committee,

having examined, pursuant to Article 144(1) and (6) of the Rules of Procedure, the proposal for a Council Regulation on the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (2014-2018) complementing the Horizon 2020 – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (COM(2011) 812 final) (No 83),

having noted that the proposal for a Regulation under consideration:

- covers all relevant aspects for the Euratom Research and Training Programme for 2014-18 (hereinafter 'Euratom Programme'), including research activities in nuclear energy (fusion and fission) and radiation protection,
- inserts the Euratom Programme in 'Horizon 2020', the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, of which it is an integral part for the five years covered (from 2014 to 2018). Nuclear research programmes are in fact limited to five years by the Euratom Treaty,
- establishes the budget for the Euratom Programme, dividing the financial envelope into funding for indirect actions and direct actions,
- sets the objectives of the various activities (fusion energy research and development activities, fission and radiation protection research activities, and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) direct actions in nuclear security and safety) and specifies the instruments for supporting them;

having noted that ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) will be addressed in a separate Decision; as is well known, Euratom has undertaken to participate in ITER construction and its future exploitation; the European Union contribution is managed through the 'European Joint Undertaking for ITER and the Development of Fusion Energy' (hereinafter 'Fusion for Energy'), established by Council Decision of 27 March 2007; the activities of Fusion for Energy are to be regulated by a separate legislative act;

having noted that the proposed financial envelope for the implementation of the Euratom Programme, as detailed in Article 4, is EUR 1 788.889 million, distributed as follows:

- EUR 709.713 million for indirect actions for the fusion research and development programme,
- EUR 354.857 million for indirect actions for nuclear fission, safety and radiation protection,
- EUR 724.319 million for direct actions;

having welcomed the general provisions relating to the proposal for a Regulation under consideration, including in particular those relating to Article 5 (Association of third countries), Article 9 (Gender equality), Article 10 (Ethical principles), Article 14 (Attention to the requirements of small and medium-sized enterprises), Article 15 (Public-private and public-public partnerships), Article 16 (International cooperation with third countries and international organisations), Article 17 (Communication and dissemination) and to the two articles in Chapter III (Control);

having noted that the objectives of the indirect actions of the Euratom Programme, as indicated in Annex I to the document under consideration, are:

- A) Support safe operation of nuclear systems

- B) Contribute to the development of solutions for the management of ultimate nuclear waste
- C) Support the development and sustainability of nuclear competences at European Union level
- D) Foster radiation protection
- E) Move toward demonstration of feasibility of fusion as a power source by exploiting existing and future fusion facilities
- F) Lay the foundations for future fusion power plants by developing materials, technologies and conceptual design
- G) Promote innovation and industry competitiveness
- H) Ensure availability and use of research infrastructures of pan-European relevance
- I) European Fusion Development Agreement;

having noted that the objectives of the JRC direct actions, as indicated in Annex I to the document under consideration, are:

- a) Improve nuclear safety including: fuel and reactor safety, waste management and decommissioning, and emergency preparedness
- b) Improve nuclear security including: nuclear safeguards, non-proliferation, combating illicit trafficking, and nuclear forensics
- c) Raising excellence in the nuclear science base for standardisation
- d) Foster knowledge management, education and training
- e) Support the policy of the Union on nuclear safety and security and the related evolving Union legislation;

expresses a favourable opinion on the subsidiarity aspects, pursuant to Article 3 of the Protocol on the role of national Parliaments in the European Union, because the abovementioned activities envisaged for the five-year period 2014-18, in the context both of indirect actions of the Euratom Programme and of JRC direct actions, are of common interest to the Member States of the Union, are on a scale of financial commitment and duration such that they cannot be carried out nationally and their results will be made available without distinction to all interested parties in the Union.

The Committee does, however, also make the following critical observations:

1. The actual activity programmes as indicated in Annex I to the document under consideration (and subsequent Annexes), for both indirect actions of the Euratom Programme and JRC direct actions, are in general described in just a few lines, without any indication of the resources available for each of them. The programmes often correspond to those in the previous five-year programme for 2007-11, set out in the Council Decision of 18 December 2006 concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) for nuclear research and training activities (2007 to 2011) (2006/970/Euratom); for example, the activity programmes under objectives A), B), D) and H) above match the activities 'Reactor systems', 'Management of radioactive waste', 'Radiation protection' and 'Infrastructures' respectively in 2006/970/Euratom; basically, rather than 'programmes' in the normal sense of the word, the activity programmes mentioned in the Annexes are fields of activity, almost always very extensive.

2. The presentation of the activity programmes relating to the three objectives concerning fusion development – E) 'Move toward demonstration of feasibility of fusion as a power source by exploiting existing and future fusion facilities', F) 'Lay the foundations for future fusion power plants by developing materials, technologies and

conceptual design', and I) 'European Fusion Development Agreement' – is unsatisfactory since it makes no mention whatever of the very serious scientific and technological problems and problems of industrial reliability still remaining for the construction of commercial facilities for the production of electricity by means of nuclear fusion, or of the progress of the IFMIF and DEMO initiatives outlined in Euratom's Seventh Five-Year Framework Programme (2007-11) mentioned above, or of details of the scale of funding likely to be provided to lines of fusion research being carried out at the national level. As regards fusion energy, the Committee does not agree with inserting, in recital (7) of the proposal for a Regulation under consideration, the sentence '*Secondly it is necessary to establish an ambitious, yet realistic roadmap towards the production of electricity by 2050*', given that this sentence does not appear to take account of the fact that the unknowns yet to be resolved for commercial power plants using energy from nuclear fusion, regarding plasma physics, materials and technological fundamentals, are very serious and such as to render impossible any planning of activity programmes capable of achieving electric power production from nuclear fusion by 2050.

3. No justification whatever is given for the conspicuous increase envisaged for the financial allocations to the indirect actions of the Euratom Programme and JRC direct actions compared with those in the five-year programme for 2007-11. In this regard it was clearly not possible to justify the increase proposed for the budget of the Horizon 2020 Programme compared with the Seventh Framework Programme 2007-13; in particular, the Committee notes that the financial envelope proposed in the document under consideration for JRC direct actions in the five-year period 2014-18 is EUR 724.319 million, a 40.1% increase over the financial allocation to JRC activities in the five-year period 2007-11 (EUR 517 million);

4. Finally, the time limit of 31 December 2022 set by Article 21 (Evaluation) of the document under consideration for the European Commission's completion of its *ex-post* evaluation of the Euratom Programme (which will finish on 31 December 2018) seems excessively late. The Committee considers that such a time limit would be reasonable if the Euratom Programme had a seven-year duration 2014-20 like Horizon 2020, but loses its effectiveness and *raison d'être* when the duration of the Programme is only five years to 31 December 2018.