



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 10.04.2014  
C(2014) 2492 final*

*Mr Pietro GRASSO  
President of the  
Senato della Repubblica  
Piazza Madama, 1  
IT – 00186 ROMA*

*Dear President,*

*The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion on and the endorsement of the Commission's 'Proposal for a Council Regulation on the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen 2 Joint Undertaking' {COM(2013) 506 final}.*

*The Commission welcomes the recognition of the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen (FCH) Joint Undertaking launched under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities (FP7, 2007-2013).<sup>1</sup> As the Senato della Repubblica rightly points out, it has proved to be an efficient platform to create a strong partnership for leveraging public and private funding and for the strong involvement of industry. It has a key role in demonstrating the potential of hydrogen as an energy carrier, and of fuel cells as energy converters, to offer a pathway for clean systems that reduce emissions, enhance energy security and stimulate the economy. This is why a contribution of FCH 2 Joint Undertaking is proposed by the Commission in Horizon 2020 and has been agreed upon by the Council and European Parliament.*

*With regard to the observations raised by the Senato della Repubblica on the inclusion of basic research in the Research Programme of the FCH 2 Joint Undertaking, the Commission would like to highlight that a decision in this respect is to be taken by the Governing Board of the Joint Undertaking, where both the Industry and the Research communities are represented. The result so far of on-going discussions with the partners on the definition of work programmes is that the FCH 2 Joint Undertaking should pave the way for the commercialisation of fuel cells and hydrogen in Europe by 2024. Following this rationale, the activities generally need to be of a more applied nature (indicatively, Technology Readiness Level 3 and above) in order to ensure that a direct contribution to the final objectives of the Joint Undertaking can be expected within the foreseen timeframe. More basic research would only be addressed by the FCH 2 Joint Undertaking if deemed critical for the success of the Joint Undertaking, and if expected*

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EC) No. 521(2008) of the Council of 30 May 2008 setting up the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking, OJ L153/1, 12.6.2008, p. 1-20

*to contribute directly to its objectives. Basic research in the relevant fields of research could be ensured via other parts of the Horizon2020 programme, complementary to the FCH activities.*

*More fundamental research on fuel cells and hydrogen remains of course to be of great importance in view of future developments and to secure European competitiveness. It will be adequately covered by other instruments, such as the European Research Council, the Future and Emerging Technologies Component of Horizon 2020 or Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, all of which aim to foster more frontier research and explore alternative technologies that may only yield results in the long term.*

*The Commission welcomes the Senato della Repubblica's wish to set up a national platform for fuel cells and hydrogen, feeling that strong synergies at national and regional level can be established with the FCH 2 Joint Undertaking, and that transnational coordination and harmonisation is a must for the deployment of FCH technologies.*

*It should also be recalled that the FCH 2 Joint Undertaking is one of the initiatives included in the Innovation Investment Package, to be implemented under the rules of Horizon 2020, the European funding programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020). Therefore, the FCH 2 Joint Undertaking calls for proposals would in principle all be launched by the end of 2020, while projects could continue until the end of 2024.*

*It is the Commission's belief that Horizon 2020 in general and the FCH 2 Joint Undertaking in particular offer an enhanced set of opportunities for Italy's research performing entities from both the public and private sectors.*

*The Commission hopes that this letter addresses the observations raised by the Senato della Repubblica and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*