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Press release | 25.06.2013

Horizon 2020

Timid agreement on the future of European research policy

After six months of laborious negotiations, the European parliament and Council today reached agreement on Horizon 2020, the EU's Framework programme for research and innovation for the period 2014-2020. While the package deal has some good elements and allows for the preparation of the 2014 calls, it lacks the ambition that the European parliament's industry committee wanted to give it.

Philippe Lamberts, Greens/EFA MEP and group spokesperson on research policy, commented:

"In terms of budget, the figure proposed by the Council in the multiannual financial framework has remained untouched. At €68bn, it is well below the €100bn the parliament has called for to help Europe become a leader in global research and innovation. Regrettably, the Council has chosen to preserve the most backward-oriented components of the EU budget, at the expense of everything that is future-oriented. Furthermore, the budget is accompanied by a funding model that will significantly increase the share of public money in every project compared with the previous Framework programme (FP7). This will reduce the number of projects, which will in turn be more generously funded, including industry research activities (125 % of direct costs) with little regard for state aid rules and weak requirements in terms of access to research results or public policy oriented goals. This will result in a lower return on investment per euro of EU funding. However, in a context of scarcity of available public funds, the funds should have been better leveraged in order to encourage additional funding from the private sector.

The program foresees a share of around 10% of the total budget for SMEs, but this remains an indicative target, not a binding commitment. The Greens are nevertheless proud to have been the leading force behind ensuring that at least €2.7bn are exclusively allocated to projects initiated and run by SMEs. The fact that this amount, which actually represents in absolute terms a status-quo compared to the previous financing period (2007-2013), had to be wrestled at great pains from the Council and Commission speaks volumes about the abyss between the SME-friendly discourse of these bodies and their actual attitude, which continuously favours big business.

In terms of the energy sector, the Greens have also been instrumental in ensuring an increased share of the budget is allocated to sustainable energy research and innovation activities. At least 85% of the energy funds should be allocated to renewable energy and end-use energy efficiency technologies, as well as smart grids and storage to maximise uptake of renewable energies. Greens were also successful in insisting that the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme should be continued, so as to prevent the Commission cancelling 15 years of successful financing of real-life energy and climate solutions.

Further achievements include preserving "Science in and for Society" as a cross-cutting programme aimed at ensuring better engagement and participation of citizens and civil society in research and innovation activities. The programme includes activities for anticipating and assessing environmental, health and safety impacts of technologies, in particular biotechnologies and nanotechnologies."

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Philippe Lamberts

Member

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