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STATEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S REASONS

Subject : Common position adopted by the Council on 25 September 2006 with a view to the adoption of a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013)

STATEMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S REASONS

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 15 April 2005, the Commission submitted to the European Parliament and the Council its proposals for a Decision of the European Parliament and the Council concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013), and for a Council Decision concerning the 7th Framework programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) for nuclear research and training activities (2007-2011)¹.
2. This proposal is based on Article 166(1) of the EC Treaty.
3. The Economic and Social Committee delivered its opinion on 15 December 2005². The Committee of the Regions delivered its opinion on 17 November 2005³.
4. The European Parliament delivered its opinion on the proposal on 15 June 2006⁴.
5. The Council adopted its common position on the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013) on 25 September 2006, in accordance with Article 251 of the Treaty.⁵

¹ Doc. 8087/05 RECH 80 ATO 45 COMPET 68 CODEC 266 - COM(2005) 119 final.

² OJ C 65, 17.03.2006, p. 9.

³ OJ C 115, 16.05.2006, p. 20.

⁴ See doc. P6_TA-PROV(2006)0265 (not yet published in the OJ).

⁵ The Council has also reached a political agreement on the text of the Council Decision concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) for research and training activities (2007-2011). The final adoption of this Decision will take place simultaneously with the final adoption of the EC Framework Programme Decision. The draft text has been transmitted to the European Parliament for information.

II. BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THE PROPOSAL

- a) Pursuant to Title XVIII of the EC Treaty (Articles 163 – 173), the Community will carry out activities on research and technological development. In particular:
- pursuant to Article 163(1) TEC, the Community shall have the objective of strengthening the scientific and technological bases of Community industry and encouraging it to become more competitive at international level, while promoting all the research activities deemed necessary by virtue of other Chapters of this Treaty;
 - pursuant to Article 165(1) TEC, the Community and the Member States shall coordinate their research and technological development activities so as to ensure that national policies and Community policy are mutually consistent;
 - pursuant to Article 166(1) TEC, all research and technological development activities of the Community shall be set out in a multiannual Framework Programme (the current Sixth Framework Programme expires at the end of 2006).
- b) The European Councils in Lisbon in March 2000, Santa Maria de Feira in June 2000 and Stockholm in March 2001 adopted conclusions aimed at the rapid establishment of a European research and innovation area (ERA) with a view to the EU becoming by 2010 the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. The re-launch of the Lisbon Strategy undertaken in 2005, and the report of the high-level group of independent experts chaired by Esko Aho, which was mandated by the European Heads of State and Government meeting at Hampton Courts, confirmed the validity of the strategy with regard to scientific research, technological development and innovation.

On this basis, the Commission has proposed that the Seventh Framework Programme should, in order to fulfil the objectives laid down in the Treaty and contributing to the Lisbon process by helping to make a reality of ERA and enabling open coordination so that appropriate cooperation in S/T research activities is undertaken at national and European levels, have the following new characteristics:

- concentration on a selected number of thematic priorities in which Community action can add the greatest possible value, and where in some duly justified cases, support for a long-term strategic research agenda could be granted in the framework of Joint Technology Initiatives;
- support for research at the frontiers of knowledge, through investigator-driven basic research performed by the most excellent research teams in Europe, through the creation of an independent European Research Council;
- better education and research training, easier access to research opportunities and better recognition of the researcher's contribution to the goals of society, through the strengthening of the human resources policy within the framework programme building on the positive experiences with the "Marie Curie" Actions under previous framework programmes;
- optimising the use and development of European research infrastructures; strengthen the innovative capacities of SMEs and their ability to benefit from research; support the development of research-driven clusters; unlock the potential in the EU's convergence and outermost regions; bring science and society closer together, and give support to the coherent development of research policies at Community and national level;
- strengthen the important role of the Joint Research Centre in providing customer-driven scientific and technological support for the conception, development, implementation and monitoring of Community policies, and in functioning as an independent reference centre for science and technology in the EU in the areas of its specific competence;
- simplification and streamlining of the implementation arrangements, on the basis of improved management procedures.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE COMMON POSITION

A. General observations

The Council's common position reflects to a considerable extent both the proposal of the Commission and the opinion of the European Parliament as regards the structure, scientific and technological content, means of implementation of the Framework Programme as well as the financial amount and its indicative breakdown.

During its examination of the Commission's proposal, the Council sought to incorporate to the largest possible extent the amendments of the European Parliament, to reflect the considerable degree of consensus between the two legislative bodies, while at the same time respecting the general thrust of the Commission's proposal. To this end, the Council has followed certain guiding principles:

- (1) recognition of the role of the Framework Programme as an instrument for achieving major Community objectives, bearing in mind that the bulk of European research and technological development efforts are funded by the Member States at national level;
- (2) the need for a focussed Community research effort bringing about a critical mass of expertise and European added value, while ensuring sufficient in-depth coverage of relevant topics under the themes chosen for Community research;
- (3) the need to complement the focussed effort on key thematic research areas by providing flexible support to Community policies and by enabling a response to emerging scientific and technological needs in the rapidly evolving research environment, while setting appropriate parameters for such flexibility so as to ensure legal clarity;
- (4) the need to implement the Framework Programme using instruments which are apt to achieve the critical mass of expertise and European added value in the research activities, while ensuring a smooth transition from the Sixth Framework Programme and safeguarding the possibility for all interested parties/entities to participate in Community research, provided the criterion of scientific excellence is fulfilled;
- (5) the need to give greater importance to public-private partnership at all levels, including strongly improved support for research and technological development of SMEs as well as long-term strategic research agendas of whole industry sectors such as those defined by European Technology Platforms and - in a few carefully selected cases - the setting up of Joint Technology Initiatives;

- (6) the need for clarity, in particular by providing the necessary level of detail, both in terms of S/T content and funding, bearing in mind that the Framework Programme must be implemented through specific programmes which will, by their very nature, provide for more detailed implementing modalities.

B. Specific comments

1. Main amendments to the Commission proposal

(a) Ethical issues

Concerning ethical issues, the Council has agreed to the line suggested by the European Parliament in its first-reading opinion: rules with regard to ethics in the Seventh Framework Programme, and in particular with regard to embryonic stem-cell research, are now clearly set out in the text of Article 6 of the Framework Programme Decision. In addition, the Commission has made it clear that it will maintain the practice adopted during the Sixth Framework Programme and excluding the activities of destroying human embryos, including for the procurement of stem cells, from Community financial support under the RTD framework programme.

(b) Scientific and technological content

i. Cooperation

While broadly maintaining the Commission's proposal on the scientific and technological content of the thematic priorities, the Council, in the light of the European Parliament's amendments, clarified and extended the scope of certain of them as follows:

- the number of priorities was increased from nine to ten, splitting security research away from space research;
- special attention will be paid to ensuring there is an effective coordination between the thematic areas and priority scientific areas which cut across themes, such as forestry research, cultural heritage, marine sciences and technologies;
- in order to support research aiming at identifying or further exploring new scientific and technological opportunities in a given field, as well as in their combination with other relevant areas and disciplines, future and emerging technologies and unforeseen policy needs will be addressed in an open and flexible way, through specific support for spontaneous research proposals, including for joint calls, in order to nurture novel ideas and radically new uses and to explore new options in research roadmaps, in particular linked with a potential for significant breakthroughs;
- dissemination and transfer of knowledge will be prioritised in order to facilitate the use of results by industry, policy makers and society, with appropriate restrictions for the security theme due to the confidentiality aspects of its activities;
- particular attention will be paid to assure an adequate participation of SMEs. To this end, and broadly reflecting the views of the European Parliament, the aim will be to enable at least 15% of the funding available under the "Cooperation" part of the programme to go to SMEs. The Council has also recognised the role of European Technology Platforms while not, however, suggesting direct funding to them, considering that a project based approach is more appropriate to reach this aim;
- concerning the Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs), the Council accepted the European Parliament's amendment adding supplementary criteria as regards their creation. Hence, the nature of JTIs must be clearly defined, in particular with regard to matters concerning financial commitments, duration of the commitment of the participants, rules for entering and exiting their contracts, and intellectual property rights. In addition, strong efforts will be made to ensure their transparent operation and that any allocation of Community funding by the JTIs will take place on the basis of the principles of excellence and competition;

- in the first priority (Health), in response to concerns expressed by the European Parliament, a broader scope of research has been accepted, notably including post-genomic research; new preventive tools for regenerative medicine; new delivery approaches; modelling of complex systems; age-related illnesses including dementia; Hepatitis C and potentially newly emerging epidemics such as SARS; rheumatoid and musco-skeletal diseases; aspects of palliative medicine; patient safety and better use of medicine including aspects of pharmacovigilance and scientifically tested complementary and alternative medicines; research into health-care systems including home care strategies and assessing the cost, efficiency and benefits of different interventions; research on lifestyle and environmental factors and their interaction with medication;
- in the second priority (food, agriculture and biotechnology), the objective has been broadened to include environmental challenges, aquaculture, coastal contexts and response to specific dietary needs of consumers. Activities have been widened to include bioinformatics, sustainable use of biodiversity, land-based biological resources including soil fertility, plant health, epidemiological studies, diseases linked to animal feedstuffs and other threats to the sustainability and security of food production including climate change; the role of fisheries has been highlighted in response to the views of the Parliament;
- in the third priority (information and communication technologies). By building upon the amendments proposed by the European Parliament, this priority has been strengthened to include product, service and process innovation and creativity; reduction of digital divide and social exclusion; the needs of people with special needs including the ageing population; promotion of accessibility and transparency of governance and development processes; RTD management and communication; innovative high-value ICT based products and services; ICT research activity based on the 'open source' development model; various exploitation paths and business models as a result of ICT research; photonics; Free, Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS); sustainability issues in the field of electronics; exploitation of quantum effects; storage; mathematics; natural cooperation; improvement of health care provisions; health information space for knowledge management; ecological aspects of mobility; access to interactive digital content;

- accessibility and use over time of scientific resources and assets in multicultural environment; empowerment of small and medium-sized organisations and communities; traditional industries; and optimisation. In addition, and in contrast to the original Commission's proposal, research into Future and Emerging Technologies has been made an integral part of all activities under this priority, not merely as a single activity under this priority.
- in the fourth priority (nano-sciences, nano-technologies, materials and new production technologies), the rationale has been broadened to include power generation, energy, ceramics and nano-medicine. Activities have been extended to include manufacture of basic materials and components; nano-metre precise components; monitoring and sensing; nano-composites; geo and optical technologies; footwear and steel.
- In the fifth priority (energy), the rationale and activities have been strengthened to include identification of adequate and timely solutions for energy systems due to finite nature of conventional oil and natural gas reserves; affordable energy costs for citizens and industries; reference to both 2005 and 2006 Green Paper⁶, Europe's world leadership in a number of energy generation and energy efficiency technologies; electricity production from wastes; production of fuels from biomass and waste; storage; distribution and use of carbon-neutral fuels, in particular biofuels for electricity generation; highly efficient and cost-effective power and/or heat generation plants with near zero emissions based on in particular underground storage; development and demonstration of other solid fuel conversion technologies producing also secondary energy carriers and liquid and gaseous fuels; development of energy storage options; further final and primary energy consumption savings for buildings and transport; the use of new and renewable energy technologies and energy demand management measures and devices; scientific support for policy development. In addition, concerning the polygeneration, it was found appropriate at this stage, due to limited resources, to integrate it under activity 'Energy efficiency and savings' and not as a separate activity as proposed by the European Parliament.

⁶ 2005 Green Paper on Energy Efficiency (COM (2005)265),
2006 Green Paper on a European strategy for sustainable competitive and secure energy (COM (2006) 105).

- in the sixth priority (environment, including climate change), the Council followed the line of the European Parliament by extending the objective to include climate and adaptation of environmental pressures, and the rationale to include construction and fisheries, references to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Convention on Combat Desertification and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants; as well as the contribution of environmental technologies to sustainable consumption and production; natural heritage; and higher competitiveness while at the same time ensuring a more sustainable future for next generations. Scope of activities have been clarified to more explicitly include polar regions; global and regional interactions; atmosphere, effects of the sea level rise on coastal zones and impact on particularly sensitive areas; improvement of forecasting; droughts, forest fires, landslides, avalanches and other extreme events as part of climate disasters; impact of disasters related to geological hazards and climate; improvement of management strategies, also within a multi-risk approach; control of invasive alien species, lagoons; preservation of landscape; sustainable products; protection, conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, including human habitat; alternative testing strategies using in particular non-animal methods for industrial chemicals; third party assessment instruments; assessment, exploitation and management of natural resources; and differing scales of observation;
- the seventh priority (transport, including aeronautics) has been improved to include benefits for all citizens; transport's relevance on environment; interoperability and intermodality of waterborne transport; smaller size vehicles for different applications; innovative maintenance; repair and overhaul; accessible combinations of technologies; sustainable surface transport; transport applications such as hydrogen and fuel cells, taking into account cost-efficiency and energy-efficiency considerations; logistics; means of transport with lower levels of pollution; infrastructure maintenance; and EGNOS;
- the eight priority (socio-economic sciences and the humanities) has been extended to include demographic change; definition of regulatory measures in cultural, scientific and technological areas, as well as in the area of gender equality;

- intangible goods; regional cohesion; socio-economic impact of European policies and legislation; reconciliation of professional and family life; disability issues; inequalities; ethnicity and religious pluralism; developing regions; peace fostering; future development of the enlarged EU; role of civil society; and dissemination of knowledge;
- in the ninth priority (space), the rationale has been broadened to incorporate forestry; health; technological spin-off effects and indispensability of space applications in a high-tech society; efficient exploitation of space assets in coordination with in-situ assets, including airborne assets; and cost-effective missions. Activities have been extended to include in-situ monitoring; support to the integration and harmonisation of Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) data (both satellite-based and in-situ, including ground based, shipborne and airborne); development of space-based systems for risk prevention and risk management and all kinds of emergencies, enhancing convergence with non-space systems; maximisation of scientific added value through synergies with initiatives of ESA or national space agencies in the field of space exploration, and facilitation of access to this scientific data; coordination of efforts for the development of space-borne telescopes and detectors, as well as for data analysis in space science; and bio-medicine;
 - in the tenth priority (security), the objective has been improved to include natural disasters and privacy. The broadened rationale includes support to Community policy in the field of health, and the emphasis of the security research for European capabilities regarding surveillance, distribution of information and knowledge of threats and incidents as well as systems for better assessment and situation control through better use of common ICT-systems in the fields of different operations. Activities have been extended to include methods for rapid identification; restoration of safety in case of crisis; providence of an overview of, and support for diverse emergency management operations; security systems interconnectivity; intelligence, information gathering and civil security; mission oriented research related to cultural, social, political and economic dimensions of security, the role of human values and policy making, psychology and social environment of terrorism.

ii. Ideas

The Council followed the line of the European Parliament to enable the rapid creation of the European Research Council (ERC), consisting of an independent scientific council and a dedicated implementing structure. By building upon the EP's amendments, it has also further extended the text to ensure that the management of the ERC will be carried out by staff recruited for that purpose; that the Scientific Council will represent a diversity of the research fields and that they will be appointed for a period of four years, renewable once, on the basis of a rotating system; that the Scientific Council will also establish an overall scientific strategy, have full authority over decisions on the type of research to be funded, and also establish a code of conduct addressing, inter alia, the avoidance of conflicts of interest; that the administrative and staffing costs of the ERC will be consistent with lean and cost-effective management; that the Commission will ensure that the ERC will act in accordance with the principles of scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency and transparency, and draw up an annual report on the ERC's operations and realisation of the objectives and submit it to the European Parliament and the Council; and that the ERC will have the faculty to conduct its own strategic studies for preparing and supporting its operational activities.

However, the Council has opted for a more flexible approach than the European Parliament as regards the ERC's structure. A decision on a possible modification of ERC's structure should therefore be taken only after the interim evaluation of the Framework Programme, foreseen for no later than 2010, in the context of which an independent review of the ERC's structures will explicitly look at the advantages and disadvantages of structures such as an Executive Agency or Article 171 of the Treaty, against criteria of scientific excellence, autonomy, efficiency and transparency.

iii. People

The Council has agreed to the large majority of the European Parliament's amendments. This programme now includes a reference to building on the experience with the "Marie Curie" actions under previous Framework programmes and their impact on the European Research Area; training specifically intended for young people; increased participation of women researchers; open European labour market for researchers free from all forms of discrimination; special measures to encourage early-stage researchers and support early stage of scientific careers, as well as measures to reduce 'brain drain'; encouragement of centres of excellence around the European Union; synergies with other Community policies; and the broadening of scientific and generic skills, including those relating to technology transfer and entrepreneurship.

iv. Capacities

While broadly maintaining the Commission's proposal, the Council decided to include coherent development of policies as a separate activity undertaken in this part of the Framework programme rather than keeping it as a horizontal part of other activities in the "Capacities" programme.

In the light of the European Parliament's amendments, the Council further clarified the scope of certain activities, as follows:

- in the "research infrastructures" activity, the objective now refers to the development of the European Research Area. The scope of activities regarding existing infrastructures have been clarified to include access to high performing research infrastructures also from researchers from industry and SMEs; evolution and development of global connectivity; open standards for interoperability. Concerning new infrastructures, Community activities should focus mainly on the preparatory phases, given that Member States' role will remain central in their development and financing. As regards the criteria for funding, the Council extended the list to include contributions to technological development capacity, and to developing 'research-based clusters of excellence', as well as the possibility of using EIB loans and Structural funds;

- in the "research for the benefit of SMEs" activity, the Council has followed the line of the European Parliament to include bridging the gap between research and innovation; enhancing the exploitation of research; research providers; complementarity with the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme as well as with other Community programmes; in response to amendment from the European Parliament, support to "national exploratory awards" has been added, whilst limiting its scope to preparing proposals for actions under "research for the benefit of SMEs" as the Council considered that the clear focus should be in support for research projects;
- in the "regions of knowledge" activity, the Council extended the scope to include facilitation of the emergence and creation of regional clusters which contribute to the development of the European Research Area; support to emerging Regions of Knowledge; relationship with Structural Funds; and synergy with the Community and relevant national and regional programmes;
- in the "research potential" activity, the activities have been clarified to include synergies with the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme in order to promote the regional commercialisation of R&D in collaboration with industry;
- in the "science and society" activity, the Council has broadened the activities to include measures to make scientific publications more accessible to members of the public wishing to consult them; promotion of the role of women in research and in scientific decision-making bodies; creation of an open environment which triggers curiosity for science in young people; promotion of full participation of young people in science; improved inter-communication and mutual understanding between the scientific world and the wider audience; better presentation of scientific work; support to scientific publications;

- in the "activities of international cooperation", the Council has provided that activities, currently undertaken by INTAS which will be wound up by the end of 2006, will be subsumed in this programme as well as in the specific programmes "Cooperation" and "People". It has also extended the objective to include facilitation of contacts with partners in third countries with the aim of providing better access to research carried out elsewhere in the world; the activities will also include specific cooperation actions of mutual interest.

v. *Non-nuclear actions of the Joint Research Centre*

The Council clarified the rationale to include coordination of actions under this part with the research undertaken under the "Themes" of the "Cooperation" Specific Programme with the aim of avoiding overlap and duplication. Activities have been extended to include scientific/technical support to the development of risk assessment and management procedures as a tool for the European decision-making process; expertise and role in the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) research activities and in the development of new applications in this field; and development and validation of alternative strategies, and in particular non-animal methods, in all relevant research areas.

(c) *Overall amount and breakdown of funds*

Following the conclusion of the Interinstitutional Agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and sound financial management⁷, the originally proposed budget for the Seventh Framework Programme of 72.726 million euro had to be reduced while preserving appropriate focus and critical mass. The Council has maintained the Commission's amended proposal for the maximum overall amount of EUR 50 521 million, in accordance with the European Parliament's opinion. The Council has however proposed adjustments to the breakdown of this figure, as follows:

⁷ OJ C 139, 14.6.2006.

- In the "Cooperation" part, the Council has followed the line of the European Parliament's amendments to increase the funding for the thematic themes which have a great potential for improving European competitiveness, in particular as regards the first (health), the fifth (energy) and the eighth priority (socio-economic sciences and the humanities), but not to the same extent. Following the split of the "security and space" theme into two separate priorities, the Council decided to earmark EUR 80 million less for security than for space because it considers that Community competence in this area remains limited;
- In the "Capacities" part, the Council followed the line taken by the European Parliament to cut the proposed funding for "research infrastructures" and instead substantially increase the funding for "research for the benefit of SMEs". Nevertheless, the Council considers that activities in the "Capacities" part constitute an essential element of the Framework Programme as they support key aspects of European research and innovation capacities; therefore they suffered a considerably smaller reduction than that foreseen by the European Parliament;
- Concerning the "Ideas" and "People", the Council has kept the funding as proposed by the Commission, and hence did not follow the European Parliament's amendments which increased the funding for both these parts of the Framework Programme at the expense of "Capacities".

2. Council's position on the European Parliament's amendments

The Council's common position incorporates a large number of the European Parliament's amendments (232 of the 326 amendments suggested), in whole, in substance or in part, sometimes in a modified form or in a different place, and often in the form proposed by the Commission in its modified proposal, as outlined above.

(a) The Council's common position incorporates the following amendments, in whole or in substance:

- 1, 3, 4, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 24, 26, 32, 35, 39, 43, 44, 47, 52, 58, 59, 66, 76, 88, 93, 95, 97, 121, 126, 130, 132, 137, 142, 146, 148, 149, 153, 162, 173, 174, 180, 181, 182, 183, 189, 190, 192, 193, 198, 201, 209, 214, 215, 216, 221, 224, 225, 226, 227, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 243, 245, 246, 251, 256, 262, 264, 266, 273, 284, 288, 289, 294, 295, 296, 297, 302, 303, 304, 309, 324;

(b) The Council incorporated in principle, or in part, the following amendments:

- 2, 5, 6, 16, 17, 19, 20, 25, 27, 30, 31, 33, 34, 40, 42, 45, 46, 50, 53, 60, 63, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 94, 96, 98, 99, 101, 104, 106, 107, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 119, 120, 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 128, 129, 131, 136, 138, 140, 141, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 163, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 175, 177, 178, 179, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 195, 196, 197, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 210, 211, 213, 222, 223, 228, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 244, 248, 253, 255, 257, 268, 269, 272, 274, 275, 276, 278, 280, 286, 287, 291, 293, 298, 299, 300, 313, 315, 334, 350, 351, 359, 361, 362;

(c) The Council followed the Commission in not incorporating the following amendments:

- 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 36, 37, 38, 41, 48, 49, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 62, 64, 65, 74, 83, 91, 92, 100, 102, 103, 105, 108, 116, 117, 118, 133, 134, 135, 139, 143, 144, 145, 147, 150, 151, 152, 161, 164, 176, 191, 194, 212, 217, 218, 219, 220, 229, 247, 249, 250, 252, 254, 258, 259, 260, 261, 263, 265, 267, 270, 271, 277, 279, 281, 282, 283, 285, 290, 292, 301, 305, 306, 307, 308, 310, 311, 312, 314, 320, 347, 349, 360.

IV. CONCLUSION

In establishing its common position, the Council has taken full account of the Commission's proposal and the European Parliament's opinion in first reading. A considerable number of amendments, in full or in part, have been incorporated in the common position with the aim of meeting the bulk of the European Parliament's concerns. The Council believes that its common position represents a well balanced text and it looks forward to constructive discussions with the European Parliament with a view to rapid adoption of the Seventh Framework Programme as well as its implementing measures (i.e. Rules of Participation, Specific Programmes).
