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NOTE

From:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
To:	Council
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Subject:	COUNCIL DECISION on the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, on the multiannual technical guidelines for this programme, on the multiannual financial guidelines for managing the assets of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel - General Approach - Decision to re-consult the European Parliament

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 10 December 2025, the Commission submitted to the Council a proposal for a Council Decision on the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, on the multiannual technical guidelines for this programme, on the multiannual financial guidelines for managing the assets of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, and repealing Decisions 2003/77/EC and 2008/376/EC.

2. In accordance with Protocol No 37 on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union, the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS) is an EU research programme, funded outside the Multiannual Financial Framework by the revenue of the assets of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in liquidation allocated to this fund. The RFCS finances exclusively research projects in the coal and steel sectors.
3. The proposed Decision is part of a package of proposals to revise the RFCS' legal framework to provide for research and innovation funding to support the decarbonisation, clean transition and competitiveness of the coal and steel sectors. This proposal lays down the technical guidelines for the Research Programme, with revised objectives and call conditions, aligns funding rates with the EU research funding programmes, and sets out the financial guidelines for managing the assets of the RFCS.
4. In accordance with the second paragraph of Article 2 of Protocol No 37, the European Parliament is to be consulted on the proposal. The European Parliament has been consulted on the proposal on 4 February 2026, but it has not yet issued its opinion. Since the text submitted for a general approach substantially changes the Commission's proposal regarding the programme's length, it is recommended to consult the European Parliament on the text as revised by the Council.

II. WORK WITHIN THE COUNCIL

5. The Research Working Party discussed the proposal on four occasions. Following these discussions, the Presidency has amended some provisions of the Commission's proposal to take into account delegations' requests. This proposal was also discussed at a meeting of the Financial Counsellor Working Party, focusing on the aspects related to the management of the assets of the fund and other financial provisions.

6. The amendments made relate mainly to lengthening the duration of the Research Programme from four to eight years by committing the financial envelope of the programme from 1 January 2027 to 31 December 2034 and providing clarifications on the programme objectives as well as the research objectives for coal and steel. The agreed text is set out in the addendum to this note.
7. On 18 February, the Permanent Representatives Committee was able to endorse the agreement reached at Working Party level.

III. CONCLUSION

8. The Council is therefore invited to:
 - reach a general approach as set out in doc. 6340/26 ADD 1 at its meeting on 27 February 2026, and
 - decide to invite the European Parliament to give its opinion on that text.