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RESEARCH FUND FOR COAL AND STEEL (RFCS)

Research Programme Information Package

Part 1 – Introduction and objectives

DISCLAIMER

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1 RFCS Research Programme Information Package

The Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS) is a funding programme of the European Union intended to support research and innovation in the sectors related to coal and steel. This Information Package provides all necessary guidance and information to potential applicants. It is composed of four parts.

This Part 1 (Introduction and objectives of the RFCS Research Programme) provides overall information on the structure, budget and policy priorities of RFCS and its Research Programme.

Part 2 (Calls for proposal) presents yearly Calls and their structure, budget and annual priorities, and specific admissibility and eligibility conditions should there be any.

Part 3 (General Provisions) explains the general rules applicable to the Research Programme, including inter alia:

- general admissibility and general eligibility conditions, the definition of eligible activities;
- criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion;
- award criteria;
- legal and financial set-up of the grant agreements.

Part 4 (Guide for Applicants and Manual of evaluation and selection of proposals) explains the submission process and provides information to enable applicants to submit a valid proposal; it provides the mandatory documents for submission; and it explains the evaluation process and the decision process in the selection of proposals to be funded.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to also consult the [RFCS legal basis](#), the EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual, and the new RFCS Model Grant Agreement 2021.

The RFCS legal basis sets the legal ground for the Research Programme and provides an overview of the legal architecture for its implementation (e.g. the role of Advisory Committee, project monitoring, etc.).

The ‘EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual’ outlines the procedures to register and submit applications online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal and practical recommendations on preparing the application.

The General Model Grant Agreement for the RFCS - Multi & Mono 2021 (MGA) contains the rules applicable to all grants awarded under the Research Programme; it is therefore highly relevant for the preparation of proposals.

2 Policy objectives

The [European Green Deal Communication](#)¹, presented by the European Commission in December 2019, is the European growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use.

Within the European Green Deal objectives, applicants to the RFCS Calls should consider the following elements when preparing their proposals:

- Energy-intensive industries, such as steel [...] are indispensable to Europe’s economy, as they supply several key value chains. **The decarbonisation and modernisation of this sector is essential.**
- The Commission will support **clean steel breakthrough technologies** leading to a zero-carbon steel making process by 2030.
- A power sector must be developed that is based largely on renewable sources, complemented by the **rapid phasing out of coal.**
- The EU should also **reinforce current initiatives** [...] on cross-cutting climate and environment issues. This may include ending global fossil fuel subsidies in line with its G20 commitments, [...] phasing out all new coal plant construction, and action to reduce methane emissions
- Focus on the **regions and sectors that are most affected** by the transition because they depend on fossil fuels or carbon-intensive processes
- **Protect people and workers** most vulnerable to the transition, providing access to re-skilling programmes, jobs in new economic sectors

The European Commission issued further relevant Communications on policy priorities such as a New Industrial Strategy for Europe², Just Transition Mechanism³ and the Sustainable European Investment Plan⁴.

The latest (2011-2017) Monitoring and Assessment of the RFCS Research Programme report, highlights the major future challenges for the European coal and steel industry – (i) to cut

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en, as updated by the Communication “Updating the 2020 New Industrial Strategy: Building a stronger Single Market for Europe’s recovery”, COM(2021) 350.

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1588582651667&uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0021>

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1579099555315&uri=COM:2021:22:FIN>

greenhouse gas emissions, (ii) to make sustainable use of energy and resources, and (iii) to develop new competitive, high-performance products and processes⁵.

The Research Programme is consistent with the political, scientific, and technological objectives of the Union, and complements the activities carried out in the Member States and within the existing Union Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities ('Horizon Europe').

The European Commission encourages complementarity, synergies and sequencing among research programmes and supports the exchange of information between projects financed under different instruments. To this regard, the Research Programme is complementary to national and other European financial instruments for research and innovation, including Horizon Europe, ESIF, ERDF, the Innovation Fund and LIFE.

3 Research Objectives

The RFCS Research Programme has the following research objectives, for the Coal and Steel sectors respectively:⁶

Coal

1. Supporting the just transition of the coal sector and regions;
2. Improving health and safety;
3. Minimising the environmental impacts of coal mines in transition.

Steel

4. New, sustainable and low-carbon steelmaking and finishing processes;
5. Advanced steel grades and applications;
6. Conservation of resources, protection of the environment and circular economy;
7. Management of work force and working conditions.

Within these research objectives, the Research Programme provides for a bottom-up approach, leaving applicants free to submit proposals in any relevant area, according to the terms set down in this Information Package. Each proposal shall include an assessment of anticipated industrial, economic, social and environmental benefits (Article 26 of Council Decision 2008/376/EC "Content of proposals").

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/research-fund-coal-and-steel-monitoring-and-assessment-report_en

⁶ Definitions of RFCS Research Programme objectives for Coal and Steel are given in Art 1 of Commission proposal (COM(2020)320) for a COUNCIL DECISION amending Decision 2008/376/EC on the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel and on the multiannual technical guidelines for this programme.

4 Calls for proposals

The following call(s) will fund projects that meet the policy objectives and the research objectives of the Research Programme:

Call	Indicative Annual Budget (EUR million) ⁷	Deadline(s)
RFCS Annual Call	40	September 202x
Clean Steel Partnership Call	52	To be determined
Coal Regions in Transition Call	19	To be determined
Overall indicative annual budget	111	

⁷ The budgets presented are included in the Commission Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION Amending Decision 2003/76/EC establishing the measures necessary for the implementation of the Protocol, annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel COM(2020)319 and Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION Amending Decision 2003/77/EC establishing the measures necessary for the implementation of the Protocol, annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel COM(2020)321.