

Establishing the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform ('STEP')

2023/0199(COD) - 17/10/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 385 votes to 85, with 151 abstentions, **amendments** to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform ('STEP') and amending Directive 2003/87/EC, Regulations (EU) 2021/1058, (EU) 2021/1056, (EU) 2021/1057, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) 2021/1060, (EU) 2021/523, (EU) 2021/695, (EU) 2021/697 and (EU) 2021/241.

The issue was referred back to the relevant committee for interinstitutional negotiations.

Objectives of STEP

The regulation should establish a 'Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform' (STEP) to support strategic technologies and their respective supply chains in the sectors concerned, and thus contribute to the implementation of the action programme for the digital decade to 2030.

STEP aims to strengthen various EU programmes and funds and to channel up to EUR 160 billion into new investments, alongside cohesion policy incentives and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF).

The platform should foster the growth of crucial technological value chains in the **digital economy, net-zero industries, and biotechnologies**, as well as addressing **labour and skill shortages, and foster deep-tech innovation**, which has the potential to deliver transformative solutions, rooted in cutting edge science, technology and engineering, including innovation combining advances in the physical, biological and digital spheres.

When implementing programmes and activities to achieve the objectives under this Regulation, the Commission and Member States should put specific emphasis on supporting **Net-Zero Industry Valleys projects** in territories included in the Territorial just transition plans and in less developed and transition regions, as well as more developed regions in Member States whose average GDP per capita is below the EU average of the EU-27 measured in purchasing power standards (PPS) and calculated on the basis of Union figures for the period 2015-2017.

Financial support

Financial support for the implementation of the Platform should be provided from existing Union programmes, namely InvestEU, Horizon Europe, EU4Health, Digital Europe, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund (JTF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the European Defence Fund, and the Innovation Fund, for projects contributing to the STEP objectives.

Members stated that this should be accompanied by providing **additional Union funding of EUR 13 billion**.

Of this, EUR 5 billion should be used to increase the endowment of the Innovation Fund and **EUR 4.2 billion** to increase the total amount of the EU guarantee available for the EU compartment under the

InvestEU Regulation to **EUR 10.5 billion**, taking into account the relevant provisioning rate. **EUR 1.3 billion** should be made available to increase the financial envelope under the Horizon Europe Regulation and **EUR 2.5 billion** to the European Defence Fund.

Sovereignty Seal

The Commission should award a Sovereignty Seal to any project contributing to the achievement of one of the objectives of the platform, provided that this project has been evaluated and meets the minimum quality requirements. The Seal would be valid during the period of implementation of the project, during which the company undertakes **not to relocate the project outside the Union**. It would not be awarded to projects managed by a legal entity established in a third country which is not associated with the Union program concerned.

STEP Committee

The STEP Committee should be composed of Commission experts on the technologies and on the Union programmes and funds from which the Platform is financially supported. The Committee should award and promote the Sovereignty Seal and manage the Sovereignty Portal and assume a coordination role between the different networks and actors concerned to achieve the objectives of the platform.

Sovereignty Portal

The Sovereignty Portal should include a rapid simulator to provide project promoters, especially SMEs, guidance on the Union programme or fund for which their particular project may be eligible. The simulator should not require project promoters to provide confidential business information and its results should not be legally binding on the authorities responsible for the awarding of funding.

Evaluation of the Platform

By 31 December 2025, the Commission should provide the European Parliament and the Council with an interim evaluation report on the implementation of the Platform, on the state of dependencies of the Union, and on the sectors of strategic importance for its sovereignty, for the purpose of informing the decision-making process on the post-2027 multiannual financial framework in a timely manner.

The interim evaluation report should be accompanied by a proposal for amendments of this Regulation or by a **legislative proposal for a fully-fledged European Sovereignty Fund**, with the aim of helping to shape and strengthen a European industrial policy and to reduce strategic dependencies of the Union.

At the end of the implementation of the Union programmes and funds from which the Platform is financially supported, but no later than 31 December 2031, the Commission should provide a final evaluation report.