



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Directorate E – Prosperity
E.3 – Industrial Transformation

Consultation for the Reform of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS)

19 June 2025, from 9:30 to 12:30 CEST

AGENDA & GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE EVENT

The **Consultation for the Reform of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS)** is organized under the umbrella of the European Commission R&I Days as a virtual event by the Directorate General for Research and Innovation with the purpose to:

- 1) Review the attractiveness of work programmes run under the RFCS since 2021.
- 2) Discuss key questions for a reform of the RFCS legal framework, including the RFCS work programme.

The Commission considers this meeting as an important exchange platform to maintain an open dialogue with the coal and steel communities.

On 19 March 2025 and as follow up of the Clean Industrial Deal communication, the Commission adopted the Steel and Metals Action Plan, designed to strengthen the competitiveness of the sectors and safeguard the related industry future. In the plan a critical role is played also by R&I to support the transformation of the industry and its strategic role in the EU. Among the aspects addressed, two are of specific relevance for the RFCS programme:

- The announcement of RFCS flagship initiatives which would mobilise EUR 150 million in 2026 and 2027 and could also contribute to strengthening the European defence research dimension of the sector.
- The promise for an overall reform of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, to simplify and further accelerate investments in steel research, including research on defence applications, to be presented before the end of 2025.

The announced RFCS reform is a subject that involves not only the steel sector, but also the coal community, as both are integral part of the RFCS programme. While steel is striving to survive in EU, the coal sector is facing a transition towards closing the mining

sites with related technical and social effects, and it is dealing with environmental issues like methane emissions, which require constant control and limiting actions.

This event is gathering and addressing both the steel and coal communities to identify effective and impactful solutions to be implemented in the announced RFCS reform and directed to accelerate decarbonisation of both communities by triggering large R&I investments.

2. AGENDA

The agenda of the event is the following:

9:30: *Opening and Welcome by the Chair*, by Maria Cristina Russo, Director of DG RTD.E

9:40: *The RFCS Programme in the Evolving Commission's Policy Context*, by Jurgen Tiedje, Head of Unity of DG RTD

10:00: Overview on the RFCS calls, by Sebastiano Fumero (TBC), Head of Unity of REA

10:15: *Action 1: R&I to Support Accelerating Investment*, by Alessandra Colli, DG RTD

10:35: *Action 2: Improve the attractiveness of the RFCS programme*, by Sophie Lemahieu, DG RTD

10:55: *Action 3: Enhance the impact of RFCS funding*, by Alexandre D'Angelo, DG RTD

11:15: *Competitiveness of European steel, SMAP and upcoming IDAA*, by Immavera Sardone (TBC), DG GROW

11:25: *Coal and methane emissions*, by Dinko Raytchev (TBC), DG ENER

11:35: *Public discussion*, moderated by Jurgen Tiedje, DG RTD

Every participant is encouraged to contribute to the discussion with a polite and constructive approach. Participants should very briefly introduce themselves with name, role and institution when asking for the floor.

12:20: *Summary and next steps*.

12:30: *End of the event*.

3. GUIDING QUESTIONS

In order to prepare for the meeting and in particular for the 3 proposed Actions, please consider the following guiding questions.

A. Accelerate investment:

1. Should the announced RFCS reform be rapidly processed and implemented already in 2027 and 2028? Would this timing be appropriate for planning industrial-level investments in R&I?

B. Improve the attractiveness of the RFCS programme:

2. What is the relevance of the following aspects to improve participation in the RFCS programme?
 - a. funding rate and level per project
 - b. number of calls
 - c. opening period for the call(s)
 - d. level of prescriptiveness of the programme
 - e. opening to dual-use and defence

C. Impact of funding from the RFCS programme:

3. Would an increased budget of the annual RFCS work programme help to address the industry competitiveness/transition issues and support a more rapid striking of the Commission's policy targets?

4. USEFUL LINKS

Most recent policy documents adopted by the European Commission:

- Regulation (EU) 2024/1787 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on the reduction of methane emissions in the energy sector and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/942: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1787/oj/eng>
- Clean Industrial Deal Communication: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-competitiveness/clean-industrial-deal_en
- Action Plan for Affordable Energy: https://energy.ec.europa.eu/publications/action-plan-affordable-energy-unlocking-true-value-our-energy-union-secure-affordable-efficient-and_en
- Steel and Metals Action Plan: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/publications/european-steel-and-metals-action-plan_en
- White Paper for European Defence: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_793

On the RFCS programme:

- RTD RFCS web page: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/research-fund-coal-and-steel-rfcs_en
- A summary of the findings of the Steel Research Technical Groups, 2023: https://rea.ec.europa.eu/publications/summary-findings-steel-research-technical-groups-2023_en
- A summary of the findings of the Coal Research Technical Groups , 2023: https://rea.ec.europa.eu/publications/summary-findings-coal-research-technical-groups-2023_en