

Recommendation regarding a long-term perspective for the energy research programme

The Austrian Council stresses the importance of investments in energy research for Austria's economic development. Innovations are the only way to secure energy supplies that do not depend on imports and to increase Austria's technological lead in future. In particular, the social and ecological relevance and responsibility of energy research should be underlined. The Austrian Council is therefore committed to funding high-risk research projects and technologies that will only be marketable in the longer term.

The Austrian Council thus welcomes the energy research programme that has been jointly presented by the Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT) and the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour (BMLWB). It also recommends that the funding agency entrusted with the programme's implementation (FFG) commence work as quickly as possible.

The Austrian Council regards the energy research programme as a first important step within the framework of the current strategy process ENERGIE 2050 (e2050) and advocates the pursuit of measures which will take it to a more advanced level such as basic research, human capacity, international cooperation and infrastructure measures.

In principle, the necessary funds for the energy research programme should be provided from the Climate and Energy Fund. To enable the programme to start without delay, the Austrian Council recommends providing initial funding amounting to EUR 20 million from the contingency fund for 2007. It also advocates an additional endowment for 2007 from the Climate and Energy Fund.

In this connection, the Austrian Council believes the Climate and Energy Fund should focus on R&D and that it should be quickly endowed with new, additional funding.

To ensure the successful implementation of the energy research programme the Austrian Council believes that a continuous process of coordination between the ministries is necessary. The programme structure and specific responsibilities must be clearly outlined and communicated accordingly.

The Austrian Council welcomes the underlying concept of the programme as a learning and dynamic programme and believes that it would be expedient for the Council to be involved in the review process. At the same time, the tasks and objectives of the FORNE Initiative¹ should be taken into account.

¹ FORNE = Forschung für Nachhaltige Entwicklung (Research for Sustainable Development)