

**Question for written answer E-003282/2012  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Funding of ITER from 2014 to 2020

Although the EU has so far been deeply involved in the ITER project, obtaining the establishment of the site on its territory and funding its construction which started two years ago, the Commission now proposes ruling out the use of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to fund this research programme after 2014 (COM(2011)0931).

The Commission has justified this decision on the grounds that it is concerned that the ITER budget would soar and impact on the other MFF budget lines.

Nevertheless, thanks to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, substantial efforts have been made in recent months to improve governance of the project and minimise its costs. In July 2010, the Council proposed to strictly limit the maximum level of expenditure for the construction phase of ITER (2007-2020) to EUR 6.6 billion, and the Commission acknowledged on 20 July 2010 that 'the viability of long-term financing of ITER can be guaranteed on this basis'.

Therefore, the Commission's proposal sends a surprising message to the international partners of ITER and the European fusion community who are very involved in the project's success and do not understand this proposal. On top of that, the European Parliament (the budgetary authority) will lose control over the funding of this project with such a proposal.

Thus, several questions arise regarding the additional programme proposed by the Commission:

1. While the European institutions have agreed on a substantial improvement of the project, why is the Commission suddenly giving up on funding the European share of ITER in the framework of the EU budget?
2. Does the Commission believe that the proposed additional programme, which has never been used except for the operation of the High Flux Reactor in Petten (a budget of EUR 36 million and involving only three Member States), is suitable for a project such as ITER (EUR 2.5 billion to manage in 2014-2018, and 27 countries involved)? Does the Commission, which questioned this instrument three years ago, think that the success of ITER could be guaranteed with such a legal framework?
3. Does the Commission realise that with this instrument the European Parliament will lose control over the funding of one of the largest European and world science projects?