Customs 2000: Community action programme 1996-2000

1995/0087(COD) - 16/04/1996

The rapporteur, Mr Von Wogau (EPP, D), stressed that the aim of the ‘Customs 2000’ programme was to harmonise the different activities of the national customs services by creating uniform conditions at the Union’s external borders. Even though the Commission had accepted many of the amendments adopted by Parliament at first reading, the rapporteur noted, the Council had set its sights on other priorities in its common position. First of all, Parliament wanted to see the market developed further, with its internal borders open and a single external border. With eastwards enlargement not far off, the training programmes should in fact also include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The rapporteur went on to propose that customs officials should wear the insignia of the 12 EU stars on their uniforms in order to render the concept of Community customs more tangible. A European Customs Academy should also be established in addition to the national arrangements currently in place, together with a common customs database for the computerisation of the Community transit system. Finally, while emphasising the need to strengthen measures to combat fraud, Mr Von Wogau deplored the fact that the sums in question often had to be recovered at the expense of SMEs. Commissioner Monti stated that the Commission had taken over 23 of the 34 amendments tabled by Parliament and that the Council had included 14 of these in its common position. While underlining the importance of the ‘Customs 2000’ programme, especially for the prevention of customs fraud, Mr Monti declared that this would not be the prime instrument, since the Commission planned to put forward a number of specific proposals, including one on Community transit. As regards the present report, the Commissioner expressed his agreement with Amendments Nos 1, 3, 5, 7, 9.2, 15, 21 and 23; he also approved, with several modifications, Amendments Nos 2, 4, 8, 10, 11.1, 19 and 20. However, he was opposed to all amendments that ran counter to the principle of subsidiarity and sought to replace the responsibility of the Member States with that of the Commission, namely Amendments Nos 6, 9.1, 11.2, 14, 17, 18, 22 and 25. Finally, Amendments Nos 12, 13, 16 and 24 were deemed to be superfluous, as the Council had already incorporated them into the common position on the basis of the vote at first reading.