Customs 2000: Community action programme 1996-2000

1995/0087(COD) - 22/12/1995 - Council position

In its common position, the Council amended various sections of the Commission's text: - it firstly proposed a new legal basis for the proposal (Article 100a alone rather than Article 100a and Article 113 together), a new title ("action programme for customs in the Community" rather than "Community customs") and a new structure for the text which changed the general order of the articles; - as regards the substance, the Council made a series of changes relating to the following points: . implementation of the programme: priority was given to the partnership between the Commission and the Member States within the Customs Policy Committee, . common framework of objectives: emphasis was not placed on standardising the application of Community legislation, as the Commission and Parliament had requested, . recovery of unpaid or evaded customs duties: inclusion of the EP's amendment in this respect, . combating fraud: inclusion of the EP's amendment aimed at computerising customs services, . improving working methods: inclusion of the amendment on the conclusion of memoranda of understanding with economic operators and emphasis on the simplification of rules and procedures with a view to preventing excessive administrative formalities (but refusal to standardise checks before granting the release of goods), . implementation of specific actions: customs visits would take place in Community customs territory and not at the Community's external borders (no harmonisation of checks), . as regards the powers of customs officials and training: the Council accepted the principle of joint training of senior officials of the customs administrations of the Member States and Community institutions, . as regards penalties: the Council highlighted the respective responsibilities in relation to the application of "administrative" penalties, . as regards the budget, Community expenditure for the programme (ECU 50 million) was allocated according to a scale different from that proposed by the Commission. Furthermore, the Council deleted the paragraph concerning the use of the sums retained as the costs of collecting own resources as it felt that this was the sole responsibility of the Member States. Nor did the Council accept the other EP amendments incorporated in the amended proposal, and in particular: the reference to the European domestic market, cooperation with the associated CEECs, the common badge on the uniforms of customs officials in the Community, the reference to a study on the possibility of establishing a European Customs Academy, the right to access certain information stored in the databases of the Member States.