

Social exclusion: Community action programme 2001-2005 to encourage cooperation between Member States

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At its first meeting, the Conciliation Committee was able to reach agreement on the action programme against social exclusion, thereby bringing the procedure to a swift conclusion and ensuring that the programme could start without delay at the beginning of 2002. Under the compromise reached, Parliament's delegation managed to increase the budget of the programme by 5 million to EUR 75m and ensure that the upper limit for EU funding to support NGOs involved in the programme would be 90% of the cost of a project instead of the 80% originally proposed by the Council. The upper limit would, however, be applied only "in exceptional circumstances". Under the compromise deal, the Council agreed to an extension of possible support for "innovative approaches" in the implementation of the programme, one of the demands of the EP delegation. Moreover, Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou declared that the Commission was committed to promoting innovative approaches. Lastly, there was recognition of the role which Parliament had to play, especially in the preparation of the annual Round Table and the assessment of the Commission's annual report for the Spring European Council on the overall consistency of the policies with social cohesion, including the progress achieved in the context of the programme against social exclusion. The Commission's report would be sent to Parliament to enable the latter to express its opinion in good time.