

Development cooperation with South Africa

1999/0070(COD) - 28/02/2000 - Council position

The objective of this proposal is to ensure the continuation of financing activities as provided for in Council Regulation 2259/96/EC of November 1996 after its expiry on 31/12/1999. The budget line of the European Programme for reconstruction and development in South Africa is intended to finance programmes aimed at contributing towards sustainable development, consolidating the foundations for a democratic society and the rules of law, as well as improving the situation of the most disadvantaged groups in South African society. Although the Council followed largely the approach and objectives of the Commission and supported several amendments proposed by the European Parliament, it considered it necessary to make a number of changes to both the substance and the wording of some articles in the proposed regulation. In its common position, the Council has approved the essence and wording of the Commission's proposal with the exceptions relating to: - the legal basis: the legal basis put forward by the Commission in its proposal, namely Article 179 of the EC Treaty is considered by the Council in its common position as being appropriate in view of the aim and the contents of the proposal; - comitology: the Council considers that one committee procedure (instead of the two different ones foreseen in the Commission's proposal) will ensure maximum coordination with Member States activities and thus contribute to necessary complementarity and contribute to a simplified structure. To this end, the Council has modified the threshold for financing decisions to be submitted to the Committee from EUR 5 million to EUR 3 million; - the financial envelope: the financial reference amount has been fixed at EUR 787.5 million, 10% less than the Commission's proposal. In conclusion, the Council considers that its common position constitutes a balanced text to ensure the continuation, after its expiry on 31/12/1999, of activities financed under Council Regulation 2259/96/EC on development cooperation with South Africa. The programmes financed by the EPRD follow the priorities defined in the framework Agreement on trade, development and cooperation between the EU and South Africa.