Environment: promoting NGO primarily active in the field of environmental protection (Community action programme)

1995/0336(SYN) - 24/04/1996 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The financial aid programme is the sole aspect of overall relations between NGOs and European bodies covered by the proposal. European-wide environmental organizations have for a long time now been calling for the institutionalization of cooperation - particularly in respect of participation, information and financial support - by bringing it within the context of a formal framework (e.g. Council Decision) after consultations with the organizations in question. This is in keeping with the principle of involvement of "environmental policy actors" in the "sustainable and environmentally-compatible development" advocated in the European Communities' Fifth Action Programme on the Environment. The Economic and Social Committee would draw attention to this link. The Committee calls upon the Commission to review the funding of the aid programme insofar as its scope is to be extended. Funds for the "consultative forum" and "other meetings at national and regional levels" should be removed from the Financial Statement since the objectives connected therewith go beyond the activities of NGOs proper. In the view of the ESC, the Draft Decision should provide a clearer definition of aid beneficiaries - something which is especially important given the limited funds available. Aid should thus be concentrated on non-governmental organizations which are primarily active in the field of environmental protection at European level and have their headquarters in a Member State of the European Union. Actions or programmes carried out jointly with organizations active at national level should also be eligible for financial support. In the view of the Committee, financial support should not be limited to the provision of information and the mobilization of the population but should also include the preparation of studies and documentation. Consultations in connection with the preparation of Community regulations and European provisions in the field of environmental policy, including environmental problems occurring in other policy areas, should also receive financial support. The detailed provisions for the financial support of activities of environmental NGOs need to be reviewed. Procedures regarding the co-financing of operations carried out with European non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs) are much more generous and the differential cannot be accounted for by the different aid objectives.