TACIS: assistance to the New Independent States of the former USSR and Mongolia (amend. regul. 2053/93/EEC)

1995/0056(CNS) - 20/12/2000 - Follow-up document

PURPOSE: to present the European Commission's annual report on the Tacis Programme (1999).
CONTENT: In 1999 the Tacis programme made a major contribution to achieving the objectives of supporting the transition to market economies and to democracy in the Newly Independent States (NIS). In 1999 Tacis became even more closely integrated with EU policy in the region, with the coming into force of more Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) between the EU and individual NIS. Tacis assistance is provided on the basis of certain shared economic and political values and practices as set out in the PCAs, in particular, respect for democractic principles and human rights and the principles of market economy. Against this background, the main conclusions of the report are the following: 1) stronger links between policy and technical assistance enabled Tacis to respond even more suitably to changing circumstances in the region; 2) the new strategic approach made Tacis more visile to policy-makers, economic interest groups and civic organisations in the NIS, offering new opportunities to ensure projects benefit from local ownership; 3) the Euopean Commission's Common Service for External Relations (SCR) made progress in streamlining and rationalising the administration of Tacis assistance, including tendering and contract procedures, and particularly in financial management; 4) links with other areas of EU policy were also reinforced (e.g. visa requirements, trade links); 5) in terms of programme content, the aim has been to avoid dissipating Tacis's efforts by spreading them too thinly over too wide a range of projects; 6) with regard to environmental projects, fostering regional cooperation has been essential in addressing major environmental challenges; 7) a key theme has been the development of infrastructure (transport, energy and communications) and information-based market economies; 8) evaluaion and monitoring of Tacis projects continued in 1999. While not universally complimentary, they all recognised that Tacis is moving towards self-assessment and measurement of its activities against exacting criteria; 9) with regard to monitoring and supervision in particular, reform will mean a new division of labour between the Commission services responsible for managing the Tacis programme, among others; 10) finally, the backlog in signing contracts was cut to its lowest level since the launch of Tacis in 1991. This value, which is a cumulative measure of the residue of commitments made after deducting the value of contracts signed (and hence of commitments still available for processsing into signed contracts), was down to MEUR 455 in 1999 (after peaking at MEUR 747 in 1996). At this level, the amount is approximately equivalent to one year's Tacis budget.