European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

2004/0026(CNS) - 23/04/2004 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to reinforce the strategic role of the Administrative Board of the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions and to confer more administrative task on the Bureau.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Regulation.

CONTENT : the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions was created in 1975 and is based in Dublin. The task of the foundation is to research ideas on the improvement of living and working conditions in the light of practical experience. Its unique role in implementing these objectives has long been recognised and valued. However, in order to maintain efficiency and excellence the Foundation's core structure is in need of reform. For example, with enlargement, the Foundation's Board has increased from 48 to 78 members. In order to address the issue of flexibility external evaluators were commissioned in 2001 to prepare a report on how the Foundation's structure and procedures could be improved. A number of changes were proposed by the external evaluators, which the Commission has taken on board. Based on the conclusions of the external evaluators, as well as the opinion of the Foundation's Board, the Commission is proposing this Council Regulation as an amendment to the original legislative act setting up the Foundation in 1975. As the Commission points out some changes can and have been made internally, others require formal legislative approval. The changes envisaged are the following:

1) Reforming the role and tasks of the Administrative Board;

2) Reforming the role and task of the Foundation's Committee of Experts.

Specifically speaking, the changes being outlined in this proposal include:

- maintaining the system of national tripartite representation on the Board as a key element to the continuing success of the Foundation;

- formalising the three existing groups within the Board as well as the role of the three co-ordinator for each of the groups. The three groups relate to representatives from government, employers and employees;

- the Board should meet in principle once a year. It will be responsible for all strategic decisions relating to the annual work programme and the budget. In future it will be known as the "Governing Board", as opposed to the "Administrative Board" in a bid to reinforce its strategic, rather than administrative, role;

- as far as the Bureau is concerned it will be formally recognised and given official status under the terms of the proposed revision. Similarly, its role and relationship with the Board will be formalised;

- the Bureau will consist of eight members: the Chairperson, three vice-chairpersons of the Board, three co-ordinators and one Commission representative;

- the Bureau will have the mandate to take certain measures on behalf of the Board, if asked to do so;

- the Bureau will not vote. Decision-making will be based on consensus;

- the Committee of Experts in its current form will no longer exist;

- experts for the Committee will not be appointed on the basis of nationality but rather according to their capacity to contribute usefully to the work of the Foundation;

- provisions will be made to make it possible for the Foundation to ensure a well targeted and timely input from independent experts to its activities;

- precise arrangements will be decided by the Board on a proposal from the Director of the Foundation.

To conclude the Commission notes that the European Parliament has underlined the need to rationalise the procedures and functioning of the Foundation. The proposed changes concern mainly the governance and functioning of the Board. The proposed changes will secure the future role of the Foundation to fulfil its role in improving living and working conditions across Europe.