Equality women and men: promoting organisations active at European level, 2004-2005 action programme

2003/0109(COD) - 09/02/2004 - Commission communication on Council's position

The common position is acceptable to the Commission. In particular, it accepts the Council's decision not to accept the amendment on keeping the term "reconciling" rather than "coordinating" family life and work in the proposal for a decision. "Reconciling" was originally chosen by the Commission because it was the term used in all its documents relating to this sphere. Moreover, the amendment was intended to add, by way of illustration, a series of specific areas where activities could be funded, and it could be dispensed with. The Commission accepts the rejection of the amendment on the changing of the structure of the Annex. It is intended solely to rectify an error in presentation in the proposal for a decision. Since the Council has changed the layout of the annex in the proposal for a decision by mentioning the provisions relating to organisations active at European Union level in the field of equality in general first and the provisions concerning the European Women's Lobby in particular second, the amendment no longer makes any sense. The Commission is willing to accept Council's amendment on "non-profit making". On the one hand, the addition of the term "non-profit making" is not absolutely necessary, since Article 109(2) of the Financial Regulation provides that grants may not be intended to occasion or result in a profit accruing to the beneficiary. On the other hand, keeping the part of the sentence "an objective which is part of the European Union's policy in the field of gender equality" initially featuring in the Commission's proposal for a decision is more consistent with the general objective of the European Union's policy in this area. On the new provisions introduced by the Council and the Commission's position, the common position moves the explicit references to the European Women's Lobby in the body of the proposal for a decision to the annex and specifies that the operating grant is awarded directly to it after approval of its programme of work and budget. The Commission can accept this approach, which does not call into question the fact that the European Women's Lobby is a designated beneficiary receiving, without any call for proposals, an annual operating grant and which still upholds all the current practical arrangements for awarding the grant. The common position moves the provision on the duration of the programme in Article 6 in the proposal for a decision to a new paragraph 3 in Article 1. The Commission shares the Council's opinion that simply moving key parts of the text of the proposal for a decision makes it more comprehensible. The proposed common position is acceptable to the Commission, subject to inclusion of the transitional clause discussed at the budget conciliation meeting of 24 November 2003. The transitional clause should be worded as follows: - For grants awarded in 2004, it will be possible for the period of eligibility of expenditure to start on 1 January 2004, provided that the expenditure does not precede the date on which the grant application was lodged or the date on which the beneficiary's budget year starts; - During 2004, in the case of beneficiaries whose budgetary year starts before 1 March, an exception may be granted to the obligation to sign the grant agreement within the first four months of the start of the beneficiary's budget year, as referred to in Article 112, paragraph 2 of Council Regulation 1605/2002/EC, Euratom on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities. In this case, the grant agreement should be signed by 30 June 2004 at the latest.