

European Refugee Fund: period 2005-2010 (Decision 2000/596/EC)

2004/0032(CNS) - 12/02/2004 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : The establishment of a European Refugee Fund for 2005-2012. **PROPOSED ACT :** Council Decision. **CONTENT :** The European Refugee Fund was established in 2000 and is set to last until the end of 2005. It was the first asylum policy measure to be adopted on the basis of the Treaty of Amsterdam. Its main purpose has been to lay the foundations for collective action by the Community for the reception of asylum-seekers and people requiring international protection. And yet, when the fund was first created in 2000 the European Union did not possess a coherent body of legislation in the field of asylum. This is no longer the case and the EU has, or is in the throes of, adopting a number of asylum measures designed to complement and harmonise provisions in the field of asylum. According to the Commission this trend makes the need for continuing with the Fund all the more urgent. The presentation of a proposal to renew the European Refugee Fund for a further six years was done on the basis of mid-term reviews and wide consultations with Member States and all interested parties. Results from the mid-term review indicate that the Member States benefiting most from the ERF are Germany, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands. Together they accounted for around 64% of the total. Between 2000-2002 an estimated 250 000 - 350 000 asylum seekers or people who enjoy some form of international protection benefited directly or indirectly from the projects co-financed by the Fund.. For the second phase of ERF financing the Commission proposes that the EU's recent secondary legislation on asylum policy must be taken into account. The programme, it is proposed, will last for six years to be split into two multi-annual programmes lasting three years each. This split will make it possible to review the new financial perspectives for 2007 and what impact that will have on the Fund. The same target group defined in the first phase of the ERF will be retained but a clearer definition for people admitted into the EU for international protection reasons will be added. The three main types of measures described in the first ERF namely: reception and asylum procedures; integration and voluntary returns, will remain but come with clearer definitions. A new element to the proposed ERF II is the proposed increase from 5% to 10% for measures benefiting the whole of the Community. Community action will concentrate on best practice, more trans-national projects, dialogue and information on project results. This proposal is based on the mid-term evaluation, which concluded that the Commission needed to play a greater role in the planning and pooling of information and on the implementation phase of the projects. At the same time, measures will be taken to simplify the management framework and ensure greater coherence and interoperability between management systems and information systems. Further, the Commission will retain responsibility for examining and approving the multi-annual programmes as well as the annual implications for co-financing. Two financial phases are envisaged. The first from 2005-2007 when the amounts allocated would be broadly similar to those in the current phase but with a slight increase. The second would be from 2008-2010 when there would be a sizeable increase in the allocations - depending on the new financial perspective. The principle of an adjustment in the form of a fixed grant should also be retained. It is proposed to raise the fixed amount to EUR 300 000 for the management of the Fund and abolishing the digressive element built into ERF I. Special aid for the new Member States for the first three years of ERF II would be raised to EUR 500 000. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:** - Budget headings concerned: 18 03 03 - European Refugee Fund; 18 03 04 - Emergency measure in the event of mass influxes of refugees; 18 01 04 02 - European Refugee Fund - Expenditure on administrative management; 18 01 04 03 Emergency measures in the event of mass influxes of refugees - Expenditure on administrative measures. - Total allocation for action (Part B): EUR 670 090 million due commitment (Appropriations for 2007-2010 are given as an indicative basis and will have to remain within the post-2006 financial perspective. - Period of application: 2005-2010. - Impact on staff: 12 permanent A (multi-annual priorities); 13 permanent B (monitoring of annual programmes of action in the Member States); 5 permanent C (administrative assistance).