Employment: activities of research, cooperation, analysis and action. Action ESSEN 1996-2001

1995/0149(CNS) - 28/04/2004 - Follow-up document

Council Decision 98/171/EC established for the period 1 January 1998 to 31 December 2000 Community activities concerning the analysis, research and co-operation (ARC) among Member States in the field of employment and the labour market. In accordance with this Decision, the Commission submits the final report on the activities carried out under this programme. While not specifically designed as such, ARC has become the essential tool in support of the European Employment Strategy, used by the Commission, the Member States, social partners and other actors. Each of its constituent parts has contributed to the monitoring and development of the Strategy from the underlying analysis of current and prospective issues and the assessment of the impact of Community policies to the interactive process represented by the peer review process and the evaluation of National Action Plans. The programme was effectively complemented by other Community initiatives and the co-operation with outside organisations was very useful. Social partners, due to their networks and their organisational structures, are well placed to compile information effectively and to promote exchange of best practice. Further involvement of the social partners in the programme activities in their fields of competence will further benefit the aims of the programme and of the Employment Strategy. A better use of channels for the dissemination of the results would have further increased the impact of the ARC programmes. More human resources and continuous involvement of NGOs would have helped in making the results of the programme more widely available. Overall, the programme has provided a framework for employment related initiatives in the Commission and supported effectively the European Employment Strategy. The financial support for Eurostat has led to considerable improvements in employment statistics. Further improvements were evident as the continuous Labour Force Survey began to be implemented in Member States. The Labour Force Survey is today considered the most authoritative source of statistical information on the EU labour market. The studies supported by the programmes explore the analytical ground for the development of the EES. The Employment in Europe report provided a solid overview of the trends and key challenges. The Peer Review Process, the European Observatory and cross-country studies have been major contributors to the Employment Guidelines and helped the Member States in delivering policy initiatives effectively. The joint effort of the directorate for Employment in the Commission, Eurostat and OECD to develop appropriate monitoring systems for active labour market policies produced useful results. Further involvement of the Candidate Countries in most of the programme activities would have been beneficial and has been pursued in the subsequent EIM programme. Regarding the management of ARC, experience suggested that a reduction in the number of smaller projects and an increase in project evaluation activities helped in achieving a better focus of the activities and economised on the required resources. A trend that started from the ARC programme and continued in theEIM programme, was the gradual re-integration of key analytical activities within the Commission units. This contributes to a higher quality and coherent policy conclusions. Finally, the knowledge gained managing the ARC programme has been very useful for the improvements in the successive EIM programme.