External borders, visas, asylum and immigration: ARGO action programme 2002-2006

2004/0122(CNS) - 19/05/2004 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to amend the ARGO programme and increase the number of actions possible in the area of external borders and envisage new types of action.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

CONTENT : the principal objective of the ARGO Programme (Decision 463/2002/EC) is to promote administrative cooperation in the fields of external borders, visas, asylum and immigration. The Commission has previously put forward the possibility of revising the ARGO programme for providing financial support to national projects in the area of external borders by addressing specific structural weaknesses at strategic border points. The Commission here proposes that these would be identified in agreement with the Member States on the basis of objective criteria (risk assessment). The amended provisions clearly define the objectives that these projects or actions must pursue.

These actions will not require the active involvement of other Member States, Candidate or Third Countries. However, they will play an important role when defining the criteria for the risk assessment since this is a joint exercise between all Member States and an essential part of an integrated management of the external borders. In addition, the Member States via the Committee will also have a say in the preparation of the annual work programme and selection of this new type of project. Other Member States could also take part as observers in the preparation and/or implementation of these actions.

The European Council of Thessaloniki invited the Commission to examine the possibility of appropriating funds under heading 3 of the financial perspectives in order to address, during the period 2004-2006, the most pressing structural needs and to cover a wider definition of solidarity that would include, inter alia, Community support in the management of external borders.

The budgetary authority has substantially increased the appropriations allocated to the ARGO programme for 2004, with a view to better management of the external borders.

The provisions on the consultation of the ARGO Committee in Decision 2002/463/EC will be aligned with the new Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget.

Denmark and Ireland are not participating in the adoption of the Decision, and is therefore not bound by it or subject to its application. The United Kingdom will take part in the adoption and application of the Decision.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS :

- Budget lines and headings: 18 03 07: ARGO programme and 18 01 04 06: ARGO - expenditure on administrative management;

- Overall figures: total allocation for action (Part B): EUR 46.179 million for commitment;

- Period of application: 2002-2006;

- Overall multiannual estimate of expenditure - commitment appropriations/payment appropriations: Total EUR 45.375 million;

- Technical and administrative assistance and support expenditure: Total EUR 0.804 million. This figure includes studies, information and publications, and meetings of experts;

- Overall financial impact of human resources and other administrative expenditure: Total EUR 2,109 million. 3 permanent staff will be allocated.

- Overall total: EUR 48,288 million.

Council Decision 2002/463/EC establishing the ARGO Programme contained a financial reference amount of EUR 25 million over the period 2002-2006. However, following policy developments in particular in the area of external borders, the Budgetary Authority increased substantially the amounts allocated to the ARGO programme in 2003 (+ EUR 4,675 million) and 2004 (+ EUR 19,5 million).