

Consumers: financing Community actions 2004-2007, general framework

2003/0020(COD) - 17/06/2003

The committee adopted the report by Philip WHITEHEAD (PES, UK) amending the proposal under the 1st reading of the codecision procedure. The main amendments were as follows: - bearing in mind the need to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to the 10 new Member States to fund the new Consumer Policy Strategy, the committee wanted to allow, in certain cases, for the possibility of exceeding the 70% ceiling on Community funding provided for in the proposal. It therefore specified that this ceiling could be exceeded "for specific purposes involving effective implementation of the 'acquis communautaire' on consumer protection in the new Member States"; - administrative procedures should be made more flexible by introducing a fast-track procedure for small consumer organisations applying for minor sums (not exceeding EUR 25 000). The committee argued that small organisations were often put off by the heavy administrative burden of applying for project funding; - the definition of independent consumer organisations - and the criteria for the funding thereof - should be strict and the organisations should provide the Commission with "satisfactory accounts of their membership, internal rules and sources of funding"; - more pressure should be put on the Commission to ensure prompt payment, including "naming and shaming" Commission departments and officials responsible for failure to pay promptly; - the commitology procedure should not be used for these programmes as it would cause undue delays in granting funds; - as regards the type of measures to be financed, the committee pointed out that there was a general feeling that the traditional Young Consumer Competition was no longer as effective as it was and called for an independent inquiry into its take-up and cost-effectiveness; - lastly, the committee added a fourth objective (integration of consumer protection objectives into all relevant EU policy areas) and a corresponding new measure providing for exchange of information as to how consumer rights have been integrated into other areas of policy.