Customs 2002: action programme 1996-2002 in the Community

1998/0314(COD) - 24/07/1998 - Document attached to the procedure

PURPOSE: As required by Article 17 of decision 210/97/EC of 19/12/96, the Commission is presenting a report on the first 18 months of the implementation of the Customs 2000 programme, together with the guidelines the Commission intends to propose to improve the effectiveness of its operations in the future. CONTENT: during the period under consideration, given the available resources, the Member States and the Commission gave priority to aspects of the programme which it was hoped would open up customs administrations' activities and lay the foundations of a genuine Community customs network. Certain actions were given priority, notably: - promoting the coordinated development and application of new working methods by structuring customs controls on the basis of risk-analysis techniques, using audit techniques to check undertakings' accounts, concluding memoranda of understanding with economic operators, simplifying customs procedures, using resources rationally (creating a European network of customs laboratories), developing a common approach to management and coordinating development of computerised handling of customs procedures (priority area within Customs 2000); - strengthening the common training policy, developed within the Matthaeus programme through the establishment of a "common core of training", to serve the objectives of customs policy (for example, further development of the common training programme, finalisation of training modules that are to be taught in the national training centres...); - improving the dissemination of information to and communication with those who use customs services (organising seminars open to traders); - helping to create an international customs environment conducive to optimum management at the external frontier (deeper cooperation with the CEECs, the EFTA countries and other international bodies responsible for customs). As regards the budget, the report indicates that all the appropriations scheduled in the initial decision for the period in question have been used, with a slightly higher level of expenditure overall than planned on the development and implementation of computerised applications for the exchange of data and information between the Union's customs administrations. Overall, the Commission presents a positive appraisal of the period covered by the report, although it is too short to properly assess the impact of Customs 2000 or to produce measurable results in terms of the effectiveness of controls. Nevertheless, the report underlines the commitment of customs administrations to the operation and confirms their determination to set their activities within a stronger Community framework. The report finally makes a number of proposals with a view to improving the second phase of the programme. In view of the experience already acquired, the Commission proposes a new legal instrument, bringing together all actions currently undertaken under Customs 2000, IDA and Matthaeus. This legal instrument should strengthen cooperation with third countries and cover a longer period (until 31/12/2002). These different elements will be the subject of the next amending proposal for decision 97/210/EC.