

Agenda 2000: European Social Fund ESF

1998/0115(COD) - 01/02/1999 - Modified legislative proposal

The European Commission's amended proposal incorporates around 20 of the amendments adopted by the European Parliament at first reading. It fully supports the Parliament's proposal to use the ESF as a primary instrument for preventing and combatting unemployment. It should hence be designed to: - promote active labour market policies in order to prevent unemployment; - develop and improve systems of professional training and education in order to facilitate access to the labour market; - improve and maintain employability; - promote professional mobility and improve labour market integration; The ESF should furthermore be designed to: - promote a competent workforce; - encourage innovation; - improve women's participation in the labour market; - reduce work segregation according to gender; With regard to eligible measures, the Commission has incorporated those amendments which ensure financial support to: - apprenticeship and the promotion of employability as well as continuing training; - the development of new areas of employment, particularly in the realm of social business actions; - the development of work formulae which reconcile family life with professional life and allow flexible transition from working life to retirement; - socio-educational measures which help to enable labour market integration. Equally, the Commission has incorporated an amendment designed to favour local projects, giving priority to NGO projects and providing these with special eligibility conditions. Among the amendments not retained are, most notably, those related to the following areas: - taking account of the needs of disadvantaged groups (the long-term unemployed, disabled people, young and senior workers) and measures designed to make the ESF an instrument for combatting all forms of discrimination in the labour market (race, ethnic origin, religion, age, disablement...); - providing for measures for the non-profit-making modernisation of public services or other employment agencies as well as measures to combat social exclusion in the labour market; - setting intervention thresholds for the ESF, such as a 15% credit threshold for the improvement of workforce training systems, stimulation of innovation, support for entrepreneurship and job creation, or even a 15% threshold for measures to promote the increased presence of women on the workforce. Finally, the Commission is much less insistent than the Parliament as regards the equality of opportunities between men and women within the framework of the ESF.