International Fund for Ireland: Community financial contributions from 2000 to 2002

1999/0221(CNS) - 26/10/1999 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to support the continuation of the Community's financial contributions to the International Fund for Ireland. CONTENT : the objectives of the fund are to promote economic and social advance and to encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between the nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland. The Commission has always insisted that the Community's contribution be used as a priority for cross-community projects. On 31/10/1994, the Council adopted Regulation 2687/94/EC on Community financial contributions to the International Fund for Ireland relating to 1995, 1996 and 1997. For each of those years, 20 MECU has been provided as part of the annual budgetary procedure. In addition, on 15/12 /1997, the Council adopted Regulation 2164/97/EC on the Community financial contribution to the International Fund for Ireland relating to 1998 and 1999. For each of those years, 17 MECU was provided as part of the annual budgetary procedure. Furthermore, notwithstanding the major Community structural Fund commitment to the whole of the island of Ireland, and the considerable effort made under the PEACE Programme, it was decided by the European Council, meeting in Berlin on 24-25 March 1999, that financial contributions to the International Fund should be continued for three more years with an annual contribution of EUR 15 million, as an effective complement to other Community support for the peace process. Since the present arrangement for Community contributions expires on 31.12.1999, it is proposed that the Council adopts this proposed Regulation. A review of the performance of the Fund and the need for further support will be made by the Commission before 01.04.2001. It is further proposed that the following conditions shall apply in respect of this contribution : - priority shall be given to projects which have a strong reconciliation and cross-community element; - it shall be ensured that it has a genuine additional impact in the areas concerned and therefore be used as a substitute for other public or private expenditure. The Commission shall ensure co-ordination between the Fund's activities and those financed by Community structural policies. It shall also keep the relevant monitoring committees informed of the activities of the Fund. It shall also, in co-operation with the board of the Fund, determine appropriate publicity and information procedures in order to publicise the Community's participation in the projects financed by the Fund. In addition, the Commission shall administer the contributions and it shall submit, not later than 01.04.2002, a report to the Budgetary Authority assessing the need for continuing contributions beyond 2002. This report will cover the following matters: - a survey of the Fund's activities; - a list of projects which have received aid; - an assessment of the nature and impact of the interventions, in respect, in particular, of the objectives of the Fund and the criteria laid down in Articles 2 and 3; - an annex containing the results of the verifications and controls carried out by the Commission representative or itsagents, particularly as regards co-ordination of the Fund's activities with those carried out under Community structural policies. The annual contribution shall be paid in two parts as follows: - an advance of 80% will be paid over after the Chairman of the Board of the Fund has signed the Commission's relevant undertaking relating to grants and has undertaken to use the contribution in accordance with the provisions of Article 2 and after the Commission has received and accepted the beneficiary's annual activity report and audited accounts in respect of the previous year; - the remaining 20% will be paid over after the Commission has received and accepted the beneficiary's annual activity report and audited accounts relating to the year for which the Community contribution was made.