

Setting up of a European Agency for Reconstruction

1999/0132(CNS) - 12/11/1999 - Modified legislative proposal

The Commission's amended proposal presents some of the amendments voted by Parliament and seeks to take account of the specific requirements for Kosovo's reconstruction, which will demand the rapid implementation of numerous small-scale projects, measures to support returning refugees and the assistance of experts covering a wide range of fields. These amendments concern accompanying measures, participation of local communities in reconstruction, coordination with NGOs and consultation of Parliament before any decision to extend the Agency's activities to other areas of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The amended proposal also addresses two issues of particular importance to Parliament. The first relates to the establishment of the Agency's seat in Thessaloniki and its operational centre in Pristina, the extension of its mandate to the whole of the Western Balkans and the bringing of its activity within the framework of the Stability Pact. At Parliament's session of 27/10/1999, in Strasbourg, the Commission pointed out that the Agency's aim is the reconstruction initially in Kosovo and, subsequently, when conditions permit, of other parts of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is an instrument of the European Union and must retain its autonomy of action. Its headquarters can only be established in Thessaloniki if its operational centre retains its autonomy. This amended proposal, therefore, provides for a joint declaration by the Council and the Commission specifying which of the Agency's departments could be based in Thessaloniki with a view to safeguarding the autonomy of the operational centre and referring to coordination with the Stability Pact. It also permits the Commission to submit proposals next year for the extension of the Agency's activities to other Balkan countries under a new regulation. The second issue which has given rise to a number of amendments is the desire to bring the Agency under the sole and direct responsibility of the Commission, which would appoint the Director, Independent experts appointed by the Commission would replace the Member States' representatives on the Governing Board. The Management Committee would be replaced by an Advisory Committee. The Commission's view is that the presence of the Member States on the Governing Board will be good for the Agency and will make it easier to coordinate the Community's and Member States' reconstruction activities. However, with a view to strengthening the Commission's role in those activities of the Agency directly concerning the selection and implementation of projects, the Commission is proposing that the Governing Board's decision-making powers on these issues be replaced by an advisory role and that the Director of the Agency be appointed by the Commission.