Refugees, displaced persons, asylum-seekers: creating a European Refugee Fund

1999/0274(CNS) - 14/12/1999 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : To establish a European Refugee Fund ('the Fund') to support and encourage the efforts made by Member States in receiving refugees and displaced persons and bearing the consequences of so doing. CONTENT : The proposed Fund will operate for five years and will support Member States' actions for the reception, integration and voluntary repatriation of the target group. This latter is comprised of refugees and displaced persons. 1) Conditions for reception · the Fund supports action designed to maintain, develop or adapt infrastructure and services, supply of material aid, social assistance such as information on benefits, and administrative assistance in completing the formalities connected with the asylum procedure. 2) Integration · the Fund supports action to provide social assistance in areas such as housing, means of subsistence and healthcare or to enable beneficiaries to adjust to the society of the Member State or to provide for themselves 3) Voluntary repatriation · the actions may concern information and advice about voluntary return programmes and the situation in the country of origin and /or general vocational training and help in resettlement. The distribution of resources between Member States is proportional: 65% in proportion to the number of asylum - seekers registered over the previous three years and 35% in proportion to the number of refugees over the previous three years. The proportion of co-financing supplied by the Fund is 50% but this may be raised to 75% in the Member states qualifying for the cohesion Fund. The policy guidelines and priorities are achieved through dialogue between the Member States and the Commission. Management of projects is for the Member States by means of requests for co-financing. Actions are selected on the basis of a public call for proposals. They can be submitted by public authorities, educational or research institutions, training bodies, the social partners, international organisations and NGO's. 10% of the Fund's allocation will be set aside for Commission support to innovatory or cross-border projects, including studies, exchanges of experience and measures to promote co-operation at Community level. Funding for such projects may be 100%. The Fund also makes separate provision for emergency measures for one or Member States in the event of a sudden mass influx of refugees or displaced persons. Emergency measures fall outside the implementation of long-term measures supported by the Fund and are in addition to them. Their function is to meet the basic requirements such as food and shelter, of people who have had to flee quickly. Support for these measures may be given during the emergency period, no longer than 6 months. It may not exceed 80% of the cost of any given measure. The allocation for the Fund for 2000 is 26 million euro with a reserve of 10 million for emergency operations, but this amount may be reviewed in future budgets to match the real scale of needs. It is also proposed that the Council would review the Decision by 31 December 2004.