

Social exclusion: Community action programme 2001-2005 to encourage cooperation between Member States

2000/0157(COD) - 13/02/2001 - Commission communication on Council's position

The Council's common position maintains the main features of the proposed decision and makes several additions to the text reflecting the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, the need to develop work on indicators and criteria of assessment and the importance of involving all the stakeholders at various levels. These additions are in line with the European Parliament's amendments and the Commission welcomes them. The Council adds furthermore references in the recitals to enlargement and the work carried out by other international organisations, which the Commission also welcomes. In relation to the implementation of the programme, the Council introduces a management procedure in accordance with Decision 1999/468/EC. The Commission has proposed a consultation procedure only but accepts it because it is compatible with the said Decision and might be interpreted as a sign from Member States to become more strongly involved in the management of the Programme. In this way it can support cooperation between them, in the context of open method of coordination, more effectively. However, the Commission regrets that : - no reference is made to the revised social Charter of the Council of Europe in the recitals. The Commission suggests that the recitals should now also include a reference to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights which the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission jointly signed on 7 December 2001; - there is no mention in the recitals that the reference amount of the programme is compatible with the current financial framework; - there is no mention in the objectives of the programme in article 3 that exchanges on policies which are implemented and mutual learning shall be organised on the basis of comparable parameters. Comparability is vital in the context of the open method of coordination and for the European added value expected from the programme. Furthermore, the Commission cannot accept that : - there would be a less favourable treatment in terms of funding between European networks involved in the fight against poverty and social exclusion eligible under this programme and those eligible for funding under the anti-discrimination programme, and invites the Council to adapt its common position accordingly.