Higher education: co-operation with third countries, Erasmus Mundus programme 2004-2008

2002/0165(COD) - 27/06/2003 - Commission communication on Council's position

The text of the common position is broadly acceptable to the Commission as it largely respects the substance of the Commission's original proposal. The Commission has two main objections to the text. - the Commission regrets that the common position seeks to reduce the budget of the programme to EUR 180 million, down from the EUR 200 million proposed by the Commission. The Commission's proposal was carefully costed. The Council has not provided any justification for its proposed 180 million euros. The reduction is arbitrary and puts in danger the internal balance of the programme and its potential impact. the Commission also regrets the inclusion of selection results for Action 1 - Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses - in Article 7.1 which provides for the measures to be adopted in accordance with the committee's management procedure. The management procedure is likely to generate considerable delays in the implementation of the programme. In general, the Commission considers that the involvement of the Committee in the adoption of decisions concerning selection results does not necessarily add greater transparency to the management of the programme; it will solely make it more bureaucratic. Experience of project selection in other education programmes (such as Socrates) suggests that the impact of the management procedure on the outcome of selections would be negligible whilst at the same time adding significantly to the length of the procedure and the workload involved. Lastly, the Commission believes that this heavy procedure is not justified by the potential risks linked to the content of Action 1 nor by its prospective financial significance. The Commission considers that the text of the common position is a good basis for a European Parliament and Council Decision.