Refugees, displaced persons, asylum seekers: voluntary repatriation and reception, Kosovo emergency assistance

1998/0357(CNS) - 26/04/1999 - Final act

PURPOSE : To provide the Union with legal instruments which allows it to establish projects and measures to provide practical support in relation to the reception and voluntary repatriation of refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers. COMMUNITY MEASURE : Joint Action 1999/290/JHA adopted by the Council on the basis of Article K.3 of the Treaty on European Union, establishing projects and measures to provide practical support in relation to the reception and voluntary repatriation of refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers, including the emergency assistance to persons who have fled as a result of recent events in Kosovo. CONTENT : The objective of this Joint Action is to establish an instrument aiming to create and improve the reception and voluntary repatriation of refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers in the Member States. In order to carry this out, the financial reference amount of EUR 15 million is given for 1999, which may be the subject to revision at a later date by the budgetary authority. In addition, assistance may be given to asylum seekers who have fled from Kosovo and from neighbouring regions as a result of recent events there. More specifically, the Joint Action aims to : 1) improve the conditions in which the refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers are received in the Member States, and to support asylum procedures which are fair, efficient and accessible to persons in need of international protection; 2) assist the voluntary repatriation of refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers from the Member States to their country of origin, and their reintegration there; 3) provide emergency assistance in the Member States which receive a significant number of refugees following the crisis in Kosovo. The Joint Action defines the areas of activity covered by this initiative. Thus, the finance would be used : - in the reception context, to support the creation or the improvement of infrastructures in the Member States for the reception of the refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers, to enhance the fairness and efficiency of administrative and judicial asylum procedures (access to them, adequate information,...), to ensure a basic standard of living conditions for the persons concerned, including accommodation, medical care, education and training, special assistance to vulnerable groups (such as unaccompanied minors, victims of rape and torture,...) and to provide information to the public on Member States' obligations to persons seeking international protection; - in the context of voluntary repatriation, the collection and dissemination of information on all aspects relevant to return, including the economic and administrative situation in the country of origin, employment opportunity, propert rights and other legal matters, councelling to assist both persons who are considering whether to return voluntarily to their country of origin and those who have decided in principle to return and training and education with the aim of providing these persons concerned with skills which will be of benefit to them on return to the country of origin. Those who wish to return to their country may be eligible for financing which would cover transport costs asociated with repatriation and measures to support the reintegration in their country of origin. Concerning emergency assistance to persons following recent events in Kosovo, assistance is based on a 6 month period and aims to cover accommodation needs, means of subsistence (food and clothing), medical, psychological or other personal assistance and other costs linked to the personal administering and implementing the assistance. These measures may also include actions to facilitate the voluntary return of displaced persons when the conditions permit. The Commission will be responsible for the management of financial control. For the implementation of this Joint Action, the Commission shall be assisted by a Committee consisting of one representative from each Member State and chaired by the Commission. There are strict financial criteria set out in the text of the Joint Action. Similarly, specific procedures are planned by type of funding and measures envisaged (above or below 50,000 EUROS for reception and repatriation measures, above or below 200,000 EUROS or even a million EUROS for aid to Kosovars). The financial support from the budget of the European Communities shall not exceed 80% of the total cost of the project or measure. The Commission shall be responsible for

the monitoring and evaluation of projects and measures financed under this Joint Action. Monitoring and evaluation may be financed from the appropriations available under this Joint Action. The Commission shall prepare a summary report of measures undertaken and the evaluation carried out, to be sent to the European Parliament and the Council. ENTRY INTO FORCE : 26.04.1999. It shall apply until 31.12.1999.