

Agenda 2000: European Social Fund ESF

1998/0115(COD) - 15/04/1999 - Commission communication on Council's position

In its opinion concerning the Council common position on the ESF, the European Commission considers that the Council text is acceptable to the extent that it has taken up the general approach of the draft regulation as proposed by the Commission. Nevertheless, even taking account of the fact that this text commands the support of the Member States, the Commission is unable to support the common position for two reasons concerning the concentration of interventions: 1) with regard to the priority to be given to adaptability of the workforce and equality of opportunity between men and women, the Commission considered that these 2 areas deserved particular attention without reserving a specific proportion of the ESF for activities under these headings (as was suggested by the European Parliament). On these points, the Council has failed to include explicit references, instead undertaking that efforts should be concentrated on the "important needs and the most effective operations"; 2) with regard to the specific allocation (1%) of the ESF for actions undertaken by NGOs, the Commission considered that this was a clear and effective mechanism which would guarantee the competent organisations easy and certain access to the Fund. For its part, the Council has used a vague formulation providing for a "reasonable amount" of ESF funding for the distribution of small grants to NGOs without setting a minimum financial quota.