

Protection of the euro against counterfeiting, PERICLES action programme: extension

2005/0029(CNS) - 06/04/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to extend the Pericles programme until 31.12.2011 and to make some amendments to the programme.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

CONTENT : In line with Article 13 of the Council Decision establishing an exchange, assistance and training programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting (the 'Pericles' programme) and based on the Pericles evaluation report of 30 November 2004, it is proposed that the Council Decision be extended and amended.

The proposed period for extension is six years and the reference amount unchanged at one million euro per year.

The need for extension is based on the following factors:

-the need to cover new entries in the euro area. Current prospects are that some of the recent entrants to the EU would join the euro area in the year 2010. The programme should last at least a year after the last wave of euro entry;

- the need to have a stable framework for training/information exchange and technical assistance. Member States normally have a national training programme designed for the ground-level staff, which is completed by a European level training, under Pericles. The need to efficiently manage both levels requires a sufficiently long medium-term European framework.

Adaptations proposed:

-it is proposed to modify Articles 10 and 11 by replacing the reference to 70% with 80%. Practice has shown that Member States encounter organisational difficulties in coping with the national contribution of 30%, particularly the ones with more limited financing possibilities. This has meant that a number of actions that were considered to be useful were not carried out or were carried out as a Commission initiative;

-the introduction of flexibility in the limitation of one country-one seminar-type project (Article 12). The provision that Member States may present no more than one seminar-type project a year has introduced an asymmetry in the implementation of the programme, to the extent that the training and cooperation needs and the equivalent possibilities vary among countries. Typically, larger countries, due to the need to train larger number of staff, devote ampler financial and other means for training and conferences including under Pericles. This has meant, under the current Pericles programme, that countries wishing to carry out more than one project per year have had to artificially group the actions in one project, which complicated the assessment and the implementation of the action. The alleviation of that restriction means that, in the event more than one project is submitted

by one country, then coordination would need to be ensured by the competent national authority in that Member State.

-the option of financing administrative expenditure related to cross-border investigations (Article 3(3)). The current Pericles programme does not explicitly provide for financing of administrative support related to cross-border investigations. This financing refers to practices necessary for police investigations (information rewards etc) or actions such as hiring cars, renting of equipment, travel and subsistence of police or other agents etc. Until now, it has been of modest amounts (below 50 000 euro) and is currently provided by the ECB concerning counterfeit euro banknotes.

It is therefore proposed to add the possibility of co-financing, subject to prior assessment by Europol, administrative support to cross-border investigations, when not covered by financing from other European institutions. Financing under that heading should give priority to actions outside the euro area and not exceed EUR 100 000 annually.

It should be noted that there is a parallel proposal for a decision aiming to extend the benefits of this programme to Member States who are not part of the euro zone (please see CNS20050030.)

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS : Please see the parallel proposal mentioned above.

Budget lines : 24 02 02 Pericles

Duration of the action and of the financial impact: From 1 January 2006 until 31 December 2011

Total commitment and payment appropriations: EUR 6 million over the duration of the programme.

Human resources not included in the financial reference amount : total EUR 1,782 million

Other administrative costs not included in the reference amount : EUR 0,540 million

Detail of resources :

-Action 1(subsidies to Member States for seminars, exchanges of personnel and studies) : EUR 4,8 million over 6 years;

-Action 2 (costs borne by the Commission for seminars etc): EUR 1,2 million EUR over 6 ans.