Employment and social cohesion: programme Progress for employment and social solidarity, 2007-2013

2004/0158(COD) - 18/07/2006 - Council position

On the whole, the Council’s common position converges with the positions of the commission and the European parliament at first reading. The Council’s text takes on a significant number of the European Parliament's amendments, in whole, in part or in spirit.

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The Programme's budget of 657.59 million eurowas agreed by the three institutions in the context of the inter-institutional agreement on the Financial Perspectives for the years 2007-2013. This corresponds to **EUR 743.25** million at indexed prices.

The Council has made a major modification to the Commission's proposal: the common position, in Article 17(2), allocates the overall budget fully between the different sections of the Programme. The Commission had initially proposed a ten per cent unallocated reserve, to be distributed between the fives sections during the period of the Programme's implementation. The Parliament wished to increase the funding to two sections, Section 2 (social protection and inclusion) and Section 5 (gender equality). The Council accepts this amendment fully. It also wishes to increase the funding to two other sections, i.e. Sections 1 (employment) and 3 (working conditions). As a consequence, the Council considers that it is best to allocate all the funding from the outset of the Programme, as a relatively small reserve would be unnecessarily cumbersome to allocate annually. The Council considers that this full allocation of the funding follows the aim of the European Parliament which, in its amendments, stressed the importance of transparency in the budgetary decision-making.

The Council has also accommodated the second concern of the European Parliament and the Commission: both institutions had proposed that the distribution of funding between the policy sections be decided in the framework of the annual budgetary procedure. The Council was originally of the view that the distribution of the funding should be the responsibility of the committee to be set up to assist the Commission with the implementation of the Programme. As the funding has now been allocated, the common position is now fully in line with the position of the European Parliament and of the Commission, thereby adding more transparency to the way the Programme, and in particular the budgetary issues, will be implemented.

Lastly, certain amendments made by Parliament were rejected by the Council. These include the following:

-the reference to reconciling work and family life;

-the reference to an annual forum to evaluate the Social agenda and the Programme;

-certain references to the Social Agenda, which were considered superfluous;

-some amendments on budgetary procedure, which have become redundant now that all the Programme's funding is distributed between the different sections.