

Fight against fraud: protection of the Community financial interests, Hercule II action programme 2007-2013

2006/0114(COD) - 13/02/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Herbert **BÖSCH** (PSE, AT) on the proposal regarding the Hercules II programme, an agreed with its competent committee on the amendments necessary to the proposal. They may be summarised as follows:

- **new objectives for the programme, namely:** i) enhancing transnational and multidisciplinary cooperation between Member States' authorities, the Commission and OLAF; ii) building networks throughout the Member States, acceding countries and candidate countries, facilitating the exchange of information, experience and best practice, while also respecting the distinct traditions of each Member State; iii) providing technical operational support for national law enforcement authorities of the Member States in their fight against illegal cross border activities, emphasising support for customs authorities; iv) without undermining operational effectiveness, striking a geographical balance by including, if possible, all Member States, acceding countries and candidate countries in the activities financed under the programme; v) multiplying and intensifying the measures in the areas identified as the most sensitive, particularly in the field of cigarette smuggling and counterfeiting;

- **the programme will be implemented through three new kinds of activity:** technical assistance for national authorities : providing specific knowledge, equipment and IT tools facilitating transnational cooperation and cooperation with OLAF; support for joint operations; enhancing staff exchanges;

training : fostering better understanding of Community and national mechanisms; exchanging experience between the relevant authorities in the Member States, acceding countries and candidate countries; coordinating the activities of Member States, acceding countries, candidate countries and third countries; disseminating knowledge, particularly of an operational nature; supporting high-profile research activities, including studies; improving cooperation between practitioners and academics; raising the awareness of the judiciary and other legal professions for the protection of the financial interests of the Community; information support : developing and providing specific databases and IT tools facilitating data access and analysis; increasing data exchange; developing and providing IT tools for investigations, monitoring and intelligence work.

Parliament also wished to broaden the **types of bodies having access to the programme:** all national or regional administrations of a Member State or a country outside the Community, which promote the strengthening of Community action to protect the Community's financial interests; research and educational that promote the strengthening of Community action to protect the Community's financial interests; and non-profit-making bodies that promote the strengthening of Community action to protect the Community's financial interests.

Eligible expenditure will include expenditure in connection with the participation of representatives of the Balkan countries forming part of the stabilisation and accession process for countries of south-eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, the countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy, and certain countries with which the Community has concluded an agreement for mutual assistance in customs matters.

Parliament stated that applications for grants for activities shall be assessed in the light of: consistency of the proposed activity in relation to the objectives of the programme; complementarity of the proposed activity with other assisted activities; feasibility of the proposed activity, i.e. the real possibility that it can be carried out using the proposed means; the cost-benefit ratio; the added utility of the proposed activity; size of public targeted by the proposed activity; transnational and multidisciplinary aspects of the activity; geographic scope of the proposed measure.

A new clause is inserted regarding checks and audits. It should be noted that the Annex was deleted.