



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 4.8.2006  
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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION  
TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**pursuant to the second subparagraph of Article 251 (2) of the EC Treaty**

**concerning the**

**Common position of the Council on the adoption of a Decision of the European  
Parliament and of the Council establishing a Community Programme for Employment  
and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS**

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**1. BACKGROUND**

- (1) On 14 July 2004, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a community programme for employment and social solidarity (PROGRESS)<sup>1</sup>. This proposal was transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council on 15 July 2004.
- (2) The European Economic and Social Committee gave its opinion on 6.4.2005<sup>2</sup>.
- (3) The Committee of the Regions gave its opinion on 23 February 2005<sup>3</sup>.
- (4) The European Parliament gave its opinion at first reading on 6 September 2005<sup>4</sup>.
- (5) The Commission adopted a modified proposal for the Decision on 21 October 2005<sup>5</sup> and subsequently another modified proposal for the Decision on 24 May 2006<sup>6</sup>.
- (6) The Council adopted a Common position on 18 July 2006

**2. AIM OF THE PROPOSAL**

The overall objective of the Community programme for employment and social solidarity, PROGRESS, hereinafter the Programme, is to support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area and, thereby, contribute to achieving the objectives of the Social Agenda.

The Programme will help the Commission fulfil its role of initiative; implement and follow up EU objectives and their translation into national policies; support and monitor the

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2004) 488 final  
<sup>2</sup> OJ C 255, 14.10.2005, p. 67  
<sup>3</sup> OJ C 164, 5 July 2005, p. 48  
<sup>4</sup> A6/2005/199  
<sup>5</sup> COM(2005)536  
<sup>6</sup> COM(2004)488/2 final

implementation of EU legislation; promote co-operation with and between Member States, and with organisations representing civil society.

The Programme's activities are divided into five different policy sections: employment, social protection and inclusion, working conditions, anti-discrimination and diversity, and gender equality.

### **3. COMMISSION COMMENTS ON THE COMMON POSITION**

#### **3.1 General comments**

A partial political agreement on the Common position was reached by the Council on 8 December 2005 on the whole text except its Article 17 relating to the financing of the Programme.

The interinstitutional agreement of 17 May 2006 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and sound financial management has paved the way for a smooth and rapid adoption of the proposed Decision. Article 17 (1) relating to the financial envelope designed to cover the activities to be implemented under the Programme has been adapted in the amended proposal of the Commission of 24 May 2006. The financial envelope amounts to 743,25 million € (at current prices) for the 2007-2013 period.

The Commission supports the Common Position of the Council of 18 July 2006. The Common Position reflects a compromise which the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament can agree to.

#### **3.2 How the amendments of the European Parliament have been taken into account**

The partial political agreement on a Common Position already incorporates a large majority of the EP amendments into the text of, either in full or using different wording. On the whole the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission had convergent views on this Programme.

Two main issues were, however, outstanding. The first one related to the share of the funding to be allocated to the five policy sections (Article 17 (2) and the second to the procedure applicable for the allocation of the funding between the different sections (Article 17 (4) to be read in conjunction with Article 12 (1) d)). The Common position is a significantly positive step towards meeting the concerns expressed by the European Parliament.

On the first issue, the Common Position takes, as a starting point, the distribution key proposed by the Commission. Some policy sections have received a higher share of the budget in percentage terms. This has not been done at the expense of other sections. Indeed, the additional funding comes from unallocated reserve of 10% originally proposed by the Commission. The Council, in addition, takes on board the amendment of the European Parliament asking that more weight be given to the sections "social protection and social inclusion" and "gender equality". Finally, the Council increases the share of funding of the policy sections related to "employment" and "working conditions".

As a result, the unallocated reserve of the Commission's proposal is completely exhausted and the share of the funding to be distributed among the different policy sections is fixed from the outset.

By doing so, the Council accommodates the second concern of both 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. The Common Position of the Council 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.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The Commission considers that the Common position's text is acceptable and provides the conditions for a rapid adoption of the proposed Decision to establish the Programme. The text does not alter the substance of the original proposal of the Commission while it adds clarity and transparency for the implementation of the Programme.

**ANNEX**  
**STATEMENT**  
**FOR THE COUNCIL MINUTES**

**Commission statement**

The Commission declares that, in accordance with Article 10 of its proposal for a Decision establishing a Community programme on employment and social solidarity- PROGRESS, non-governmental organisations set up at national level in the Member States may take part in the programme.