



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 16.10.2003
COM(2003) 594 final

2003/0047 (COD)

Amended proposal for a

REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

**amending Council Regulation (EC) N° 577/98 on the organisation of a labour force
sample survey in the Community to adapt the list of survey characteristics**

(presented by the Commission pursuant to Article 250 (2) of the EC Treaty)

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1. BACKGROUND

12 March 2003: transmission of the proposal to the Council and to the European Parliament [COM(2003) 109 final - 2003/0047 (COD)].

2 September 2003: first reading by the European Parliament

2. AIM OF THE COMMISSION PROPOSAL

The labour force survey is a primary source of comparable information about labour participation in the EU. The results are widely used and are important for policy-making.

The organisation of the labour force survey in the EU to provide quarterly results, including the list of survey characteristics, was established in 1998 by Council Regulation (EC) n° 577/98. The labour market has changed over the past five years and many policy measures have come into effect as part of the coordinated process of the European Employment Strategy. In order to monitor these developments, the list of survey characteristics needs to be adapted and updated. Six new variables are added and the five variables on atypical working times are included as a standard module instead of the current gentleman's agreement. Some of the new variables are already collected in the Member States, but they are not yet available for all Member States.

In 2000, only minor changes were introduced in the codification of the variables (for example, additional reasons for absence from work; Commission Regulation No 1575/2000), while the latest Commission Regulation (EC) n° 2104/2002 was limited to improvements in the variables on education.

To balance the introduction of these new variables and to limit the response burden, the Commission proposal makes it possible to select structural variables which need only one continuous survey a year in order to estimate annual averages. Because the collection of information for these structural variables on an annual basis rather than quarterly is sufficient, data collection in these cases can be limited to a sub-sample. Achieving this balance between additional variables with a view to improving our understanding of the labour market and limiting the response burden without jeopardising the use of the results for policy monitoring or analysis, is an essential feature of the proposal.

3. COMMISSION OPINION ON THE AMENDMENT ADOPTED BY THE PARLIAMENT

3.1. Amendment accepted by the Commission

The Commission agrees to take into account in its amended proposal the single amendment adopted by the European Parliament in its plenary session on 2 September 2003. The amendment grants an exemption to Spain, Finland and the United Kingdom for the collection of the structural variables with reference to a single quarter for a transition period running until the end of 2007. This will allow these Member States to adapt their survey procedures, which have for many years been based on a quarterly structure. This amendment is in line with the Presidency compromise in the Council working party. The Commission accepts this amendment because the exemption only concerns the survey process and the new variables specified by the proposed Regulation will be available for all Member States.

4. CONCLUSION

Having regard to Article 250, paragraph 2 of the EC Treaty, the Commission amends its initial proposal for the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation. (EC) n° 577/98 on the organisation of the labour force sample survey in the Community.