



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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Amended proposal for a

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

**establishing a Community action programme to promote organisations active at
European level in the field of equality between men and women**

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

Amended proposal for a

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL

establishing a Community action programme to promote organisations active at European level in the field of equality between men and women

1. BACKGROUND

The purpose of this proposal for a decision is to provide a legal basis for issuing grants to organisations active at European level in the field of equality between men and women for the years 2004 and 2005. This decision was made necessary by the change in the Commission's budget structure under the new Financial Regulation with effect from 2004. As a result, the two budget lines currently concerned, namely A-3037 for the European Women's Lobby and A-3046 for the other organisations active in the field of gender equality, will be converted into budget lines by field of activity requiring a basic act.

On the same date of 27 May 2003, the Commission adopted six other proposals for decisions with a view to establishing a specific basic act, from 2004 onwards, for grants currently financed from administrative appropriations under part A with a view to grouping them by field of activity. The common general approach adopted for all the decision proposals under this initiative are explained in a Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 27 May 2003, COM (2003) 274 final.

This is the background to the adoption by the Commission on 27 May 2003 of its proposal for a decision establishing a Community action programme to promote organisations active at European level in the field of equality between men and women. The specific legal base is Article 13(2) EC requiring the codecision procedure.

At its plenary session of 20 November 2003, the European Parliament adopted 20 amendments to the Commission's proposal.

2. EXAMINATION OF THE AMENDMENTS

The Commission accepts amendments 2 - 5, 12 - 14, 16 - 18 and 27 as they stand, and can accept amendment 22 in part. It cannot accept amendments 6 - 11, 19 and 20.

2.1. Amendments accepted by the Commission

2.1.1 Amendment 2

This is an amendment of pure form, serving only to clarify that the decision establishes a Community programme to provide support for the European Women's

Lobby and promote other organisations active at European level in the field of equality between men and women. It is therefore acceptable.

2.1.2 Amendment 3

This amendment is intended solely to make the Commission proposal clearer by specifying that the activities of the grant-funded organisations must be in accordance not only with the underlying principles but also with the legal provisions governing Community action in the area of equality between men and women. The amendment is therefore acceptable.

2.1.3 Amendment 4

The amendment deletes the specific reference, in the body of the text, to the European Women's Lobby as a direct beneficiary of an operating grant under strand 1. This reference is in the annex to the decision. The amendment is acceptable, as this approach involving identifying the specific beneficiaries in the annex is similar in all the basic acts.

2.1.4 Amendments 5 and 18

The purpose of these amendments is to specify that the organisations in receipt of operating grants or grants for actions under strands 2 and 3 must pursue an objective of general European interest which is part of the European Union's policy in the field of gender equality. The amendment is acceptable.

2.1.5 Amendment 12

This amendment specifies that the activities of the European Women's Lobby mentioned by the Commission proposal intended to reinforce the gender equality aspect in the EU enlargement process also include developing cooperation with women's organisations in the new Member States. This is acceptable to the Commission in as far as the women's organisations referred to in the new Member States are active in promoting equality between men and women.

2.1.6 Amendments 13 and 14

These amendments add additional examples of the type of action to be financed under the programme, such as gender mainstreaming in education, sport, health and social protection and fostering cooperation with women's organisations in third countries. These are acceptable.

2.1.7 Amendment 16

This amendment specifies that the members of the European Women's Lobby include women's organisations, as its Statutes also refer to women's sections of non-governmental organisations and natural persons as members. It is therefore acceptable to the Commission.

2.1.8 Amendment 17

This amendment rectifies an error in the Commission's proposal for a decision, pointing out that the European Women's Lobby's activities are referred to in point 1.1 and not point 1.2 of the Annex. It is therefore acceptable.

2.1.9 Amendment 27

Amendment 27 reflects the current situation of the enlargement process by indicating that the acceding countries that signed the Accession Treaty in 2003 are included in the programme. This amendment is totally acceptable to the Commission.

2.2. Amendment partially acceptable to the Commission

2.2.1 Amendment 22

The Commission can accept part of Amendment 22 in as far as it specifies in recital 12 that the programme seeks to provide financial assistance to organisations in the form of operating grants for activities of general European interest in the field of equality between men and women or which pursue an aim which falls within European Union policy in this domain. The Commission cannot, however, accept the deletion of the reference to grants for actions, as this is likely to have the effect of limiting the scope of the programme, which covers the award of both operating grants and grants for actions.

The Commission can accept this amendment on condition that the reference to grants for actions is maintained.

2.3. Amendments not acceptable to the Commission

2.3.1 Amendments 6 and 7

Amendments 6 and 7 involve modifying the provisions on cofinancing, degressivity and, indirectly, the duration of the programme put forward in the Commission's proposal.

The Commission cannot accept the proposed increase in the cofinancing of the European Women's Lobby to a maximum of 90% rather than the 80% reflecting the current situation, or the application of the degressivity rule for grants to the other organisations with effect from the third year, when the programme only lasts for two years.

2.3.2 Amendments 8, 9 and 10

Amendments 8, 9 and 10 provide for an extension of the programme to 2008 and an increase in the budget to EUR 5.5 million euros.

The Commission cannot accept amendments of this kind which are not in line with the trilogue's joint declaration of 24 November 2003.

2.3.3 *Amendment 11*

Amendment 11 envisages a more cumbersome programme evaluation procedure based essentially on an external report, plus the submission of a report by the Commission by the end of 2007 rather than 2006.

The Commission cannot accept an amendment of this kind which imposes an obligation disproportionate to the amount and duration of the programme. Furthermore, as the programme finishes at the end of 2005, it would seem appropriate to maintain the obligation to submit a report by the end of 2006.

2.3.4 *Amendment 19*

The purpose of Amendment 19 is to enable operating grants following calls for proposals under strand 2 to be awarded to organisations whose activities include combating violence as an obstacle to equality.

The Commission cannot accept this amendment, as it arbitrarily gives priority to a particular activity rather than keeping the provision general.

2.3.5 *Amendment 20*

This amendment aims to provide the Parliament with prior information on the priority themes before issuing the calls for proposals. The Commission cannot accept this amendment, as it interferes with the power of execution of which the Commission has a monopoly.

3. CONCLUSION

By virtue of Article 250(2) of the EC Treaty, the Commission amends its proposal as described above.