

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on Regional Development

2009/0011(CNS)

30.3.2009

OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on the proposal for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EC)
No 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural
Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
(COM(2009)0038 – C6-0051/2009 – 2009/0011(CNS))

Rapporteur: Domenico Antonio Basile

PA_Legam

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The proposal under consideration is a prompt response by the Commission to the concerns underlying the Council's decision of 11 December 2008 to approve a European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP) containing specific measures for numerous Community and national policy sectors in order to tackle the economic and financial crisis affecting European markets since 2007.

In the rural development sector, the Commission text proposes revising relevant points of Regulation (EC) No 1698 /2005 in order to incorporate the terms of the EERP.

In particular, the Commission proposes that the sum of EUR 1.5 million be made available to all Member States via the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), to develop Internet broadband access in rural areas and to tackle the new challenges identified in the midterm assessment (completed in November 2008) of the 2003 reform of the common agricultural policy (climate change, renewable energy sources, water resources management, biodiversity).

Overall, the rapporteur fully supports the proposal, considering that these measures, if implemented quickly taking an integrated approach, will certainly be able to help turn around national economies and regenerate consumer confidence in the system.

However, in view of the obvious urgency that has characterised Community legislation and programming work at this juncture, the rapporteur considers that some additional elements should be introduced, that may help ensure that this urgency is also reflected when these measures come to be implemented in the Member States.

The amendments proposed, therefore, are intended to ensure that Member States circulate the relevant information concerning the allocation of further financial resources for actions in the rural sector to both regional authorities - so they can immediately adjust their own rural development plans - and to potential beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Moreover, it is felt that the concern expressed by the Council in line with its objective of economic recovery throughout the European Union, that opportunities for expenditure be maximised in the initial financial years, should be stressed by advocating the use of accelerated and simplified implementation procedures.

Finally, with a view to increasing transparency and the information available on the outcome for 2009-2011 and to ensure that the instruments coordinating actions financing broadband Internet infrastructure funded by the EAFRD and the Structural Funds are suitable, the Commission is asked to include a section specifically given over to verifying the results of this initiative in the annual monitoring report required for the European Rural Development Fund.

AMENDMENTS

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following amendments in its report:

Amendment 1

Proposal for a regulation – amending act Recital 8 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

8a. The concern for urgency in relation to implementing these actions calls for the employment of principles based on the speeding up and simplification of procedures, with a view to ensuring that amendments linked to the European Economic Recovery Plan come rapidly into force and guaranteeing their effectiveness in the current crisis situation.

To this end, appropriate circulation of information on the measures in this regulation to regional authorities and potential beneficiaries of the funds must be guaranteed in the Member States through widespread information initiatives.

Justification

The proposed amendment injects the urgent need to implement the actions into the grounds for the measure being adopted, through the requirement that potential beneficiaries be provided with appropriate and prompt information on the new initiative, on the one hand, and the adoption of accelerated and simplified implementing procedures, once again in relation to the tight time limits laid down in the measure, on the other.

Amendment 2

Proposal for a regulation – amending act Article 1 – point 2 Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 Article 12 a – paragraph 1 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

1a. Each Member State shall consult the competent regional authorities on the specific requirements and development strategies drawn up with a view to the implementation of the national strategy plan.

Justification

In order to meet as effectively as possible the specific needs of each individual region, the competent regional authorities must be consulted. In this way, the best possible common regional development strategy can be achieved.

Amendment 3

Proposal for a regulation – amending act

Article 1 – point 3

Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005

Article 16 a – paragraph 1 – introductory phrase

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

1. By 31 December 2009, Member States shall provide in their rural development programmes, in accordance with their specific needs, for types of operations having the following priorities as described in the Community strategic guidelines and specified further in the national strategy plans:

1. By 31 December 2009, Member States shall provide in their rural development programmes, ***following prior consultation with the competent regional authorities*** and in accordance with their specific needs, for types of operations having the following priorities as described in the Community strategic guidelines and specified further in the national strategy plans:

Justification

Whenever rural development strategies are drawn up, they must take account of regional development policy priorities. A common policy combining these two aspects – rural and regional development objectives – can make it possible to achieve the desired results.

Amendment 4

Proposal for a regulation – amending act

Article 1 – point 3

Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005

Article 16 a – paragraph 1 – point a

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(a) climate change

(a) climate change **and measures seeking to prevent soil deterioration,**

Justification

Soil plays a fundamental role in the agricultural sector. The use and management of agricultural soil are of fundamental importance in helping to meet the new challenges posed by climate change, renewable energies, water scarcity and biodiversity.

Amendment 5

Proposal for a regulation – amending act

Article 1 – point 3

Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005

Article 16 a – paragraph 1 – point b

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

(b) renewable energies,

(b) **better energy efficiency, diversification and the use of** renewable energies,

Justification

See amendment 3.

Amendment 6

Proposal for a regulation – amending act

Article 1 – point 3

Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005

Article 16 a – paragraph 1 – subparagraph 2 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

Operations of the type to be carried out in connection with the priorities listed in letters (a) - (f) of the first paragraph should be targeted also at achieving

economic, social and territorial cohesion objectives.

Justification

See amendment 3.

Amendment 7

Proposal for a regulation – amending act

Article 1 – point 3

Regulation 1698/2005

Article 16 a – paragraph 1 – subparagraph 3

Text proposed by the Commission

The revised rural development programmes related to the operations referred to in this paragraph shall be submitted to the Commission no later than 30 June 2009.

Amendment

The revised rural development programmes related to the operations referred to in this paragraph ***and based, as regards implementation of actions, on principles of speed and simplification*** shall be submitted to the Commission no later than 30 June 2009.

Justification

In view of the short amount of time available to Member States to amend their national plans, widespread and prompt circulation of the new legislation is called for as well as the use of accelerated and simple procedures both for expenditure and for submission of accounts.

Amendment 8

Proposal for a regulation – amending act

Article 1 – point 3

Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005

Article 16 a – paragraph 2

Text proposed by the Commission

2. From 1 January 2009, for types of operations referred to in paragraph 1(a) to (f) of this Article, the aid intensity rates fixed in Annex I may be increased by 10 percentage points.

Amendment

2. From 1 January 2009, for types of operations referred to in paragraph 1(a) to (f) of this Article, the aid intensity rates fixed in Annex I may be increased by 10 percentage points, ***with a view to achieving the objective of territorial convergence within the regions of the European***

Union..

Justification

Development and convergence within the regions of the European Union may be accelerated by earmarking funding for measures to meet the specific needs of each individual region. Economic progress and sustainable development can only be achieved by earmarking substantial amounts for those sectors with the highest growth potential, for example energy efficiency and biodiversity.

Amendment 9

Proposal for a regulation – amending act

Article 1 – point 6 – point b

Regulation 1698/2005

Article 69 – paragraph 5 a – subparagraph 1 a (new)

Text proposed by the Commission

Amendment

The Commission's annual report on rural development shall contain a section specifically dealing with monitoring operations connected with the priorities listed in Article 16a(g).

Justification

The purpose of this amendment is to make it possible to verify after it has begun that the accelerated procedure used for fund allocation is adequately reflected when funds are expended. The aim is to ensure that actions are fully effective and to furnish instruments suitable for ensuring the necessary coordination with similar activities financed by the Structural Funds.

PROCEDURE

Title	Support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)						
References	COM(2009)0038 – C6-0051/2009 – 2009/0011(CNS)						
Committee responsible	AGRI						
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	REGI 19.2.2009						
Rapporteur Date appointed	Domenico Antonio Basile 9.3.2009						
Discussed in committee	9.3.2009						
Date adopted	30.3.2009						
Result of final vote	<table> <tr> <td>+: </td><td>26</td></tr> <tr> <td>–: </td><td>0</td></tr> <tr> <td>0: </td><td>0</td></tr> </table>	+:	26	–:	0	0:	0
+:	26						
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Members present for the final vote	Emmanouil Angelakas, Stavros Arnaoutakis, Rolf Berend, Victor Boştinaru, Wolfgang Bulfon, Gerardo Galeote, Gábor Harangozó, Mieczysław Edmund Janowski, Rumiana Jeleva, Gisela Kallenbach, Tunne Kelam, Evgeni Kirilov, Constanze Angela Krehl, Florencio Luque Aguilar, Sérgio Marques, Maria Petre, Elisabeth Schroedter, Catherine Stihler, Margie Sudre, Oldřich Vlasák						
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Domenico Antonio Basile, Emanuel Jardim Fernandes, Samuli Pohjamo						
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Dragoş Florin David, Siiri Oviir						