Opinion on the proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) amending Regulation (EEC) No 337/75 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [1]

(94/C 195/12)

On 9 March 1994, the Council of the European Union decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 198 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, on the abovementioned proposal.

The Section for Social, Family, Educational and Cultural Affairs, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its Opinion on 14 April 1994. The Rapporteur, who worked without the assistance of a Study Group, was Mr Nierhaus.

At its 315th Plenary Session, held on 27 and 28 April 1994 (meeting of 27 April), the Committee adopted the following Opinion by a majority vote with one abstention.

1. The Committee notes that, in view of changed political circumstances, the Council decided on 29 October 1993 to transfer the seat of CEDEFOP from Berlin to Thessaloniki. The Committee is aware of the background to this decision: so far no European institution has been located in Greece, although she is clearly entitled to one.

2. In the Committee's view it is, however, wholly incomprehensible that the abovementioned political decision was apparently taken on the spur of the moment without prior notification or information, not to mention consultations with the staff of CEDEFOP and its governing board. The Committee wishes to express its disapproval in the strongest terms of such arbitrary behaviour on the part of the responsible authorities.

3. The Committee acknowledges 'the need to ensure consistency at Community level as regards the management of the staff of the different decentralized bodies'[2]. The Committee does nonetheless, consider that 'first generation' EC agencies (CEDEFOP or the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living Conditions, based in Dublin) which have been successfully in operation for nearly 20 years and which have involved the social partners directly from the outset, are by no means fully comparable with 'second generation' bodies, some of which are not yet in operation or are managed on a quite different basis.

4. The Committee consequently urges that the amendment to Article 13 of Regulation (EEC) No 337/75[3] take adequate account of the abovementioned factors. In particular, the Committee strongly urges the Commission to acknowledge the years of proven professional service of CEDEFOP employees and make it abundantly clear that there is no intention whatsoever of introducing less favourable terms of employment and working conditions for them or of downgrading these conditions.

5. The Committee would therefore consider it only fair and proper not to introduce a wholesale levelling of working conditions or to permit the conditions for appointing staff to be made less favourable in any way. Instead, solutions must be found which ensure that all employees secure equivalent or improved contractual conditions at the new place of work which are in line with the provisions applicable to EU employees, including the opportunity to acquire the full status of EU officials [see Article 1 of the Staff Regulations[4]] once they have provided evidence of their professional and specialist qualifications.

6. The Commission must also ensure that appropriate provisions for material assistance are set out in an agreement so as to preclude social hardship. These measures should include, where necessary, provisions in respect of: early retirement, staff transfers to other EC bodies, and appropriate reinforcements of staff numbers, for which the necessary funds must be made available.

7. Steps must also be taken to ensure that the entitlements acquired by employees under various social security schemes are not only maintained but also guaranteed in the long term.

8. Finally, the Committee trusts that the necessary premises, equipment and other requirements will be provided at the new seat of CEDEFOP to ensure that members of staff will still be able, as in the past, to carry out their skilled work under appropriate, decent and acceptable conditions.

9. In the Committee's view one of the particular achievements of CEDEFOP is its successful endeavour to involve the countries of northern, central and eastern Europe in its work, thereby paving the way for closer links between these states and the European Union. Every effort must be made to ensure that a new location will be equally as conducive to the performance of this

[1] OJ No C 66, 12. 3. 1994, p. 12.
[2] COM(94) 20 final, p. 3.
[3] OJ No L 39, 13. 2. 1975.
[4] OJ No L 157, 28. 6. 1977, p. 1.

essential work, which is vital to the future development of the Community.

10. The Committee trusts that once effective solutions have been found to the abovementioned problems, which concern not only the 76 persons currently employed by CEDEFOP but also their almost 300 dependants, it will be possible to transfer CEDEFOP from Berlin to Thessaloniki as smoothly as possible.

Done at Brussels, 27 April 1994.

The Chairman

of the Economic and Social Committee

Susanne TIEMANN

Opinion on:

— the Commission Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on Community guidelines on trans-European energy networks,

— the proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision laying down a series of guidelines on trans-European energy networks, and

— the proposal for a Council Decision laying down a series of measures aimed at creating a more favourable context for the development of trans-European networks in the energy sector [1]

(94/C 195/13)

On 21 February 1994 the Council decided to consult the Economic and Social Committee, under Article 129 b, c and d of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, on the abovementioned proposals.

The Section for Energy, Nuclear Questions and Research, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its Opinion on 13 April 1994. The Rapporteur was Mr Gafo Fernández.

At its 315th Plenary Session (meeting of 27 April 1994), the Economic and Social Committee adopted the following Opinion unanimously.

1. Introduction

1.1. Trans-European energy networks (TEN) were acknowledged in the Treaty on European Union as forming the backbone of the internal market and contributing to economic and social cohesion.

1.2. Specifically, Article 129c states that the Community shall establish common guidelines, implement any measures necessary to ensure the inter-operability of the networks and the harmonization of technical standards, and may support projects of common interest financially.

1.3. The Committee has had the opportunity to express its views on the importance which it attaches to these trans-European networks in constructing an internal market in electricity and gas [2].

1.4. Although some of the planned measures have a national rather than a Community dimension, it is clear that integration of the energy systems means that a common approach is needed to such aspects as cost and security of supply, quality of service, quality of the environment, and economic and social cohesion. For this reason the Committee believes that such measures

[1] OJ No C 72, 10. 3. 1994, p. 10-15.

[2] OJ No C 73, 15. 3. 1993, p. 31.