

(Acts adopted under Title VI of the Treaty on European Union)

JOINT ACTION

of 27 April 1998

adopted by the Council on the basis of Article K.3 of the Treaty on European Union, concerning the financing of specific projects in favour of displaced persons who have found temporary protection in the Member States and asylum-seekers

(98/304/JHA)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union and, in particular, Articles K.3(2)(b) and K.8(2) thereof,

Whereas the Member States consider asylum policy a matter of common interest;

Whereas taking action in favour of displaced persons who have found temporary protection in the Member States and asylum-seekers is likely to improve the conditions under which such persons are voluntarily repatriated, and whereas it is necessary to undertake specific projects on an experimental basis, with a view to establishing a legal instrument for developing further action in this area, as appropriate,

HAS ADOPTED THIS JOINT ACTION:

*Article 1*

1. Specific projects intended to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of displaced persons who have found temporary protection in the Member States and asylum-seekers shall be undertaken on an experimental basis during 1998.

2. These measures are intended primarily to cover the following areas:

- education facilities for persons concerned who are under the age of 18,
- vocational training,
- information on the economic and administrative set-up in their country of origin, with the essential aim of assisting their reintegration into their country,

— projects developed in connection with the twinning of local administrative areas,

— aid to transport.

*Article 2*

The aggregate cost of the specific projects shall not exceed ECU 13 million.

*Article 3*

The specific projects shall be financed by the general budget of the European Communities.

*Article 4*

1. Where the financing is less than ECU 200 000, the Commission shall keep the Council informed of the number of requests received for the financing of specific projects, the principles applied in granting support thereto and the results of such projects.

2. Where the financing is ECU 200 000 or more and less than ECU 1 million, the Commission shall be assisted by a committee consisting of one representative from each Member State and chaired by a representative of the Commission. The Commission shall submit to the committee a list of the projects which have been submitted to it. It shall indicate the projects it selects and shall give reasons for its selection. The committee, acting by the majority provided for in the second subparagraph of Article K.4(3) of the Treaty, shall deliver its opinion

on the various projects within a period of two weeks. The Chairman shall not vote. The opinion shall be recorded in the minutes; moreover, each Member State shall have the right to ask that its position be recorded in the minutes. The Commission shall take full account of the opinion delivered by the committee. It shall inform the committee of how it has done so.

3. Where the financing is ECU 1 million or more, the Commission shall submit to the committee referred to in paragraph 2 a list of projects which have been submitted to it. It shall indicate the projects it selects and shall give reasons for its selection. The committee, acting by the majority provided for in the second subparagraph of Article K.4(3) of the Treaty, shall deliver its opinion on the various projects within a period of two weeks. The Chairman shall not vote. If a favourable opinion is not delivered within the time limit, the Commission shall either withdraw the project(s) concerned or submit it (them), with any opinion from the committee, to the Council, which, acting by the majority provided for in the second subparagraph of Article K.4(3) of the Treaty, shall take a decision within one month.

*Article 5*

The Commission shall keep the Council informed of the results of the specific projects financed by the general

budget of the European Communities with a view to assessing the possibility of developing action in this area on the basis of an appropriate legal instrument.

*Article 6*

This Joint Action shall enter into force on the day of its adoption.

It shall be applicable until the end of 1998.

*Article 7*

This Joint Action shall be published in the Official Journal.

Done at Luxembourg, 27 April 1998.

*For the Council*

*The President*

R. COOK