

(98/C 304/184)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0516/98**by Paul Rübig (PPE) to the Council***(27 February 1998)**Subject:* 8th European Development Fund

Under the Lomé IV Convention the eighth European Development Fund was to have been launched at the end of 1997. It is to be used for financial and technical cooperation in removing structural imbalances in the countries benefiting from the Lomé Convention. The emphasis has been placed on poverty alleviation, training and industrialization, but also on health, the improvement of competitiveness and agriculture. For the first time Austria was also to participate in this programme.

However, it proved impossible to launch the eighth European Development Fund on the appointed date, and its launch continues to be delayed because not all the Member States on the European Council have ratified the plan.

Can the Council describe the substantive reasons for this delay?

When, in the Council's view, is the plan likely to be finally ratified?

Answer*(18 May 1998)*

Pursuant to Article 360(1) of the Fourth Lomé Convention, as revised by the Mauritius Agreement of 4 November 1995, the Convention will come into force on the first day of the second month following the date of deposit of the instruments of ratification of the Member States and of at least two thirds of the ACP States, and of the act of notification of the conclusion of the Convention by the Community.

This condition has now been fulfilled both by the ACP States and by the fifteen Member States. At its meeting on 27 April 1998, the Council adopted the Decision concerning the conclusion of the Agreement amending the Fourth Lomé Convention. The revised Convention will therefore come into force on 1 June 1998.

(98/C 304/185)

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0517/98**by Paul Rübig (PPE) to the Commission***(2 March 1998)**Subject:* 8th European Development Fund

Under the Lomé IV Convention the eighth European Development Fund was to have been launched at the end of 1997. It is to be used for financial and technical cooperation in removing structural imbalances in the countries benefiting from the Lomé Convention. The emphasis has been placed on poverty alleviation, training and industrialization, but also on health, the improvement of competitiveness and agriculture. For the first time Austria was also to participate in this programme.

However, it proved impossible to launch the eighth European Development Fund on the appointed date, and its launch continues to be delayed because not all the Member States on the European Council have ratified the plan.

Can the Commission describe the substantive reasons for this delay?

When, in the Commission's view, is the plan likely to be finally ratified?

Answer given by Mr Pinheiro on behalf of the Commission*(27 March 1998)*

The Commission shares the Honourable Member's concerns over the delay in the start of the 8th EDF, which is the Community's main source of aid funding for the ACP countries for the period 1995-2000.