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I

(Information)

COUNCIL**Council statement concerning the framework agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission**

(2005/C 161/01)

In the light of the signing by the European Parliament and the Commission of the framework agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission on 26 May 2005, Coreper recommends that the Council enter the following statement in its minutes and publish it in the C series of the *Official Journal of the European Union*:

'The Council has taken note of the framework agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission signed on 26 May 2005 by the two institutions, notwithstanding the spirit of Declaration No 3 on Article 10 of the Treaty establishing the European Community contained in the Final Act of the Nice Treaty.

Recalling its statement of 10 July 2000, the Council is concerned at the fact that several provisions of the new framework agreement seek to bring about, even more markedly than the framework agreement of 2000, a shift in the institutional balance resulting from the Treaties in force. It regrets not being informed earlier, in a spirit of sincere cooperation, of the negotiations on this new framework agreement. It further regrets that the two institutions concerned did not feel the need to take account of the points on which it had expressed concern in its appropriate bodies, before the agreement was signed.

The Council would point out in particular that under the EC Treaty (Article 201), a motion of censure on the activities of the Commission can only be tabled against all the members of the Commission as a college, and not an individual member. Article 217 enshrines the principle of collective responsibility for Commission action. The Council would also stress that the multiannual work programming procedure was adopted by the European Council at its meeting in Seville in June 2002. Finally, it would recall that the procedures enabling the European Parliament to be involved in international negotiations are governed by Article 300 of the EC Treaty and that practical arrangements concerning the presence of Members of the European Parliament in delegations of the Community or representing the European Union at international conferences were adopted in 1998.

The Council stresses that the undertakings entered into by these institutions cannot be enforced against it in any circumstances. It reserves its rights and in particular the right to take any measure appropriate should the application of the provisions of the framework agreement impinge upon the Treaties' allocation of powers to the institutions or upon the institutional equilibrium that they create.'

COMMISSION

Euro exchange rates ⁽¹⁾

30 June 2005

(2005/C 161/02)

1 euro =

Currency	Exchange rate	Currency	Exchange rate		
USD	US dollar	1,2092	SIT	Slovenian tolar	239,47
JPY	Japanese yen	133,95	SKK	Slovak koruna	38,414
DKK	Danish krone	7,4515	TRY	Turkish lira	1,6194
GBP	Pound sterling	0,67420	AUD	Australian dollar	1,5885
SEK	Swedish krona	9,4259	CAD	Canadian dollar	1,49
CHF	Swiss franc	1,5499	HKD	Hong Kong dollar	9,3990
ISK	Iceland króna	78,71	NZD	New Zealand dollar	1,7387
NOK	Norwegian krone	7,9155	SGD	Singapore dollar	2,0377
BGN	Bulgarian lev	1,9559	KRW	South Korean won	1 239,85
CYP	Cyprus pound	0,5735	ZAR	South African rand	8,0254
CZK	Czech koruna	30,030	CNY	Chinese yuan renminbi	10,0079
EEK	Estonian kroon	15,6466	HRK	Croatian kuna	7,3130
HUF	Hungarian forint	247,24	IDR	Indonesian rupiah	11 804,82
LTL	Lithuanian litas	3,4528	MYR	Malaysian ringgit	4,596
LVL	Latvian lats	0,6961	PHP	Philippine peso	67,685
MTL	Maltese lira	0,4293	RUB	Russian rouble	34,6370
PLN	Polish zloty	4,0388	THB	Thai baht	49,938
ROL	Romanian leu	36 030			

(¹) Source: reference exchange rate published by the ECB.

Prior notification of a concentration**(Case COMP/M.3841 — Valoriza Gestion/Aguas de Las Palmas)****Candidate case for simplified procedure**

(2005/C 161/03)

(Text with EEA relevance)

1. On 24 June 2005, the Commission received a notification of a proposed concentration pursuant to Article 4 of Council Regulation (EC) No 139/2004 ⁽¹⁾ by which the undertakings Valoriza Gestión, S.A.U. ('Valoriza', Spain) belonging to the group Sacyr Vallehermoso and Saur S.A. ('Saur', France) belonging to the group PAI Partners acquire within the meaning of Article 3(1)(b) of the Council Regulation joint control of Empresa Mixta de Aguas de Las Palmas, S.A. ('Emalsa', Spain), currently jointly controlled by Saur and by Endesa Participadas S.A. via Nueva Nuinsa S.L. ('Nueva Nuinsa', Spain). Valoriza will acquire joint control over Emalsa by way of purchase of shares in Nueva Nuinsa.

2. The business activities of the undertakings concerned are:

- Valoriza: water services management, waste management, development of alternative energies, real estate maintenance;
- Emalsa: management of water services on behalf of the municipalities of Las Palmas de Gran Canarias and Santa Brígida, and at Puerto de la Luz y de las Palmas;
- Saur: water services and waste management;
- Nueva Nuinsa: holding company.

3. On preliminary examination, the Commission finds that the notified transaction could fall within the scope of Regulation (EC) No 139/2004. However, the final decision on this point is reserved. Pursuant to the Commission Notice on a simplified procedure for treatment of certain concentrations under Council Regulation (EC) No 139/2004 ⁽²⁾ it should be noted that this case is a candidate for treatment under the procedure set out in the Notice.

4. The Commission invites interested third parties to submit their possible observations on the proposed operation to the Commission.

Observations must reach the Commission not later than 10 days following the date of this publication. Observations can be sent to the Commission by fax (No (32-2) 296 43 01 or 296 72 44) or by post, under reference number COMP/M.3841 — Valoriza Gestion/Aguas de Las Palmas, to the following address:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Competition
Merger Registry
J-70
B-1049 Brussels

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 24, 29.1.2004, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 56, 5.3.2005, p. 32.

Summary information on State aid granted pursuant to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004 of 8 September 2004 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to State aid to small and medium-sized enterprises active in the production, processing and marketing of fisheries products

(2005/C 161/04)

(Text with EEA relevance)

Aid No: XF 1/04

Member State: Italy

Region: Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Title of the aid scheme or name of the company receiving an individual aid: Rules for the implementation of Article 6(20) and (21) of regional law No 14/2003 laying down criteria and arrangements for the making grants to enable cooperatives in the fisheries sector to implement work programmes within the meaning of Article 20(3)(b) of law No 41/1982 as amended.

Legal basis: *Legge 17 febbraio 1982, n. 41 (articolo 20, comma 3, lettera b) — 'Piano per la razionalizzazione e lo sviluppo della pesca marina' e successive modifiche.*

Legge regionale 20 agosto 2003, n. 14 (art. 6) — 'Assestamento del bilancio 2003 e del bilancio pluriennale per gli anni 2003-2005'.

Delibera di Giunta regionale n. 2629 dell'8 ottobre 2004.

Annual expenditure planned under the scheme or overall amount of individual aid granted to the company: Annual expenditure under the scheme is expected to amount to EUR 385 000,00.

Maximum aid intensity: The maximum intensity of the aid is 100 % of eligible expenditure.

Date of implementation: The aid scheme will come into force following publication in the Region's *Bollettino Ufficiale* and in any event 10 working days following dispatch of this form, pursuant to Article 19(1) of the exempting Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004).

Duration of scheme or the individual aid award: Until funds are exhausted and in any event not beyond the period of validity of the exempting Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004), i.e. 31 December 2006.

Objective of the aid: Support for small and medium-sized enterprises in the fisheries and aquaculture sector through the approval of programme agreements with professional associa-

tions lasting up to 18 months to safeguard and develop the sustainable management of natural resources, promote fisheries products, protect and expand employment and encourage enterprises to form consortia.

The aid refers to Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004.

Eligible expenditure under the programme agreements:

- the associations' own staff costs or costs incurred in the purchase of services from third parties;
- expenditure directly related to the implementation of the programmes;
- leasing and depreciation of equipment and plant;
- newsletters, newspaper articles, graphics and audiovisual material of general interest to those working in the sector;
- transfers directly related to the implementation of the programmes;
- costs for the holding of conferences, congresses and seminars directly related to the implementation of the programmes;
- general expenditure directly related to the implementation of the programmes up to 12 % of the total cost of the planned initiative.

Sector(s) concerned: Sea fisheries, aquaculture, processing and marketing.

Name and address of the granting authority:

Direzione centrale risorse agricole, naturali, forestali e montagna
Servizio pesca e acquacoltura
Via Caccia, 17
33100 — Udine (I)

Web address:

www.regione.fvg.it/istituzionale/bur/bur.htm

Aid No: XF 1/05

rearing of fish, crustaceans, molluscs or other aquatic organisms;

Member State: Italy

— the purchase or fitting-out of craft and machinery used exclusively for aquaculture, the fitting-out of vehicles and equipment strictly needed for the production cycle or for the transport of products under regulated storage conditions, provided that they are in line with actual production.

Region: Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Title of aid scheme or name of company receiving an individual aid: Supplementary regional programme for fisheries assistance as provided for in the 2000-06 SPD for aid measures in support of aquaculture investment

Sector(s) concerned: Aquaculture

Legal basis: *Delibera di Giunta Regionale n. 2965 del 5 novembre 2004 - Rideterminazione per l'anno 2004 delle quote di ripartizione del 'Fondo per il finanziamento e l'adeguamento di programmi e progetti ammessi o ammissibili a finanziamento comunitario' di cui all'art 9, comma 1, lett. d) e all'art 23 della legge regionale 7/1999.*

Name and address of the granting authority:

Delibera di Giunta Regionale n. 3406 del 13 dicembre 2004 - Programma aggiuntivo regionale per interventi nel settore della pesca previsti dal DocUP 2000-2006 per le misure di aiuti agli investimenti nell'acquacoltura, nella promozione e nella pubblicità dei prodotti della pesca e per azioni realizzate da associazioni o unioni di produttori.

Direzione centrale delle risorse agricole, naturali, forestali e della montagna
Servizio pesca e acquacoltura
Via Caccia, 17
33100 — Udine (I)

Annual expenditure planned under the scheme or overall amount of individual aid granted to the company: The indicative maximum annual expenditure is EUR 650 000.

Web site:

www.regione.fvg.it/istituzionale/bur/bur.htm

Maximum aid intensity: The maximum contribution is 40 % of eligible expenditure.

Aid No: XF 2/05

Date of implementation: The aid scheme comes into force on the day of its publication in the Regional Official Gazette and in no case later than 10 working days after this form is sent, as provided for in Article 19(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004.

Member State: Italy

Duration of scheme or individual aid award: Until funds are exhausted but not beyond the term of validity of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004, i.e. 31 December 2006.

Region: Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Objective of aid: Support for aquaculture SMEs through investment aid.

Title of aid scheme or name of company receiving an individual aid: Supplementary regional programme for fisheries assistance as provided for in the 2000-06 SPD for aid measures in support of investments by producer groups or associations

The aid is granted under Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004.

Legal basis: *Delibera di Giunta Regionale n. 2965 del 5 novembre 2004 - Rideterminazione per l'anno 2004 delle quote di ripartizione del 'Fondo per il finanziamento e l'adeguamento di programmi e progetti ammessi o ammissibili a finanziamento comunitario' di cui all'art 9, comma 1, lett. d) e all'art 23 della legge regionale 7/1999.*

Eligible expenditure:

— the construction, extension or modernisation of aquaculture facilities in salt, brackish or fresh water and engaged in the

Delibera di Giunta Regionale n. 3406 del 13 dicembre 2004 - Programma aggiuntivo regionale per interventi nel settore della pesca previsti dal DocUP 2000-2006 per le misure di aiuti agli investimenti nell'acquacoltura, nella promozione e nella pubblicità dei prodotti della pesca e per azioni realizzate da associazioni o unioni di produttori.

Annual expenditure planned under the scheme or overall amount of individual aid granted to the company: The indicative maximum annual expenditure is EUR 110 000.

Maximum aid intensity: Up to 100 % of expenditure if the project is of collective interest, the beneficiary is a collective or if the project provides for public access to its results.

Up to 40 % of the eligible expenditure if the project is of individual interest, if it does not provide for public access to its results or if collectives and research institutes have made a funding contribution.

Date of implementation: The aid scheme comes into force on the day of its publication in the Regional Official Gazette and in no case later than 10 working days after this form is sent, as provided for in Article 19(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004.

Duration of scheme or individual aid award: Until funds are exhausted but not beyond the term of validity of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004, i.e. 31 December 2006.

Objective of aid: Support for SMES in the sector through contributions towards collective or individual initiatives carried out by producer groups or associations.

The aid is granted under Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004.

Expenditure on the following is eligible:

- management and control of the conditions for access to certain fishing areas, management of quotas and the fishing effort;
- promotion of the use of more selective fishing equipment or methods;
- promotion of technical stock conservation measures;
- collective equipment for aquaculture, restructuring or adjustment of aquaculture facilities, collective treatment of aquaculture waste waters;
- elimination of threats of disease in connection with rearing activities or of parasites living in water catchment areas or coastal ecosystems.
- the collection of databases or the preparation of environmental management models for the fishing and aquaculture industry with a view to preparing integrated management plans for coastal areas;

— arrangements for electronic trading, and the use of other computer technologies with a view to disseminating technical and commercial information;

— design and application of systems to improve and monitor quality, traceability, health conditions, statistical tools and environmental impact;

— better understanding and transparency as regards production and the market.

Sector(s) concerned: Sea fishing, aquaculture, processing and marketing.

Name and address of the granting authority:

Direzione centrale delle risorse agricole, naturali, forestali e della montagna
Servizio pesca e acquacoltura
Via Caccia, 17
33100 — Udine (I)

Web site:

www.regione.fvg.it/istituzionale/bur/bur.htm

Aid No: XF 3/05

Member State: Italy

Region: Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Title of aid scheme or name of company receiving an individual aid: Supplementary regional programme for fisheries assistance as provided for in the 2000-06 SPD for aid measures in support of investments to promote and advertise fishery products

Legal basis: *Delibera di Giunta Regionale n. 2965 del 5 novembre 2004 - Rideterminazione per l'anno 2004 delle quote di ripartizione del Fondo per il finanziamento e l'adeguamento di programmi e progetti ammessi o ammissibili a finanziamento comunitario' di cui all'art 9, comma 1, lett. d) e all'art 23 della legge regionale 7/1999.*

Delibera di Giunta Regionale n. 3406 del 13 dicembre 2004 - Programma aggiuntivo regionale per interventi nel settore della pesca previsti dal DocUP 2000-2006 per le misure di aiuti agli investimenti nell'acquacoltura, nella promozione e nella pubblicità dei prodotti della pesca e per azioni realizzate da associazioni o unioni di produttori.

Annual expenditure planned under the scheme or overall amount of individual aid granted to the company: The indicative maximum annual expenditure is EUR 45 000.

Maximum aid intensity: Up to 100 % of eligible expenditure if the project is of collective interest, the beneficiary is a collective or if the project provides for public access to its results.

Up to 40 % of the eligible expenditure if the project is of individual interest, if it does not provide for public access to its results or if collectives or research institutes have made a funding contribution.

Date of implementation: The aid scheme comes into force on the day of its publication in the Regional Official Gazette and in no case later than 10 working days after this form is sent, as provided for in Article 19(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004.

Duration of scheme or individual aid award: Until funds are exhausted but not beyond the term of validity of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004, i.e. 31 December 2006.

Objective of aid: To support fisheries and aquaculture SMEs through promotional assistance.

The aid is granted under Article 7 of Regulation (EC) No 1595/2004.

Eligible expenditure:

- quality certification, labelling, the rationalisation of product designations and product standardisation;
- promotional campaigns, including those to promote quality;
- market and consumer surveys and studies;
- participation in fairs and exhibitions.

Sector(s) concerned: Sea fishing, aquaculture, processing and marketing.

Name and address of the granting authority:

Direzione centrale delle risorse agricole, naturali, forestali e della montagna
Servizio pesca e acquacoltura
Via Caccia, 17
33100 — Udine (I)

Web site:

www.regione.fvg.it/istituzionale/bur/bur.htm

Information communicated by Member States regarding State aid granted under Commission Regulation (EC) No 68/2001 of 12 January 2001 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to training aid

(2005/C 161/05)

(Text with EEA relevance)

Aid No: XT 24/03

Member State: Italy

Region: Autonomous Province of Bolzano

Title of aid scheme: In-service continuing training measures for employees within the meaning of Act No 236/93 and successive ministerial circulars

Legal basis: *Il regime di aiuto si basa sul Bando Provinciale con oggetto: 'Apertura dei termini per la presentazione delle domande di contributo per azioni di formazione continua aziendale rivolta a lavoratori dipendenti ai sensi della L. 236/93 ed alle successive Circolari Ministeriali' autorizzato con Delibera della G.P. n. 5166 del 30/12/2002.*

Annual expenditure planned under the scheme:

EUR 784 241,00.

Average annual expenditure cannot be forecast, because the notice provides that projects can be submitted every month until the available funding is exhausted, but no later than 31 December 2006.

Maximum aid intensity:

Large enterprises

Specific training: 25 %

General training: 50 %

SMEs

Specific training: 35 %

General training: 70 %

The above rates of intensity are increased by

five percentage points where the measures are aimed at firms in areas which qualify for regional aid under Article 87(3)(c) of the Treaty;

ten percentage points where the training is given to disadvantaged workers within the meaning of Article 2(g) of Regulation (EC) No 68/2001.

Date of implementation: 28 January 2003

Duration of scheme: Until the available funds are exhausted.

Objective of aid: The aid is intended for general and special training. The provincial notice, authorised by order of the Provincial Executive No 5166 of 30 December 2002, gives precise definitions of the two kinds of training, in line with

Regulation (EC) No 68/2001. The assessment board will check whether each project submitted meets the definitions of general or specific training, and whether the intensity of the aid applied for is correct. If the aid intensity applied for does not comply, the board will revise the estimates and the total expenditure stated in the application accordingly.

Economic sector(s) concerned: All sectors.

Name and address of granting authority:

Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano:
Ripartizione 21 — Formazione Professionale in Lingua Italiana
Via Santa Geltrude, 3
39100 Bolzano

Direttrice di Ripartizione:

Dott.ssa Barbara Repetto Visentini;
Ripartizione 20 — Formazione Professionale in Lingua Tedesca e Ladina
Via Dante, 3
39100 Bolzano

Direttore di Ripartizione: Dr. Peter Duregger.

Other information: The notice announcing the scheme was published in the official gazette of the region, *BUR* No 4, *supplemento* 1, 28.1.2003; it allows recipient firms to choose between aid scheme status under Regulation (EC) No 68/2001, and *de minimis* status under Regulation (EC) No 69/2001.

Aid No: XT 26/03

Member State: United Kingdom

Region: Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Objective 1 Area.

Title of aid scheme: Objective 1 Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly 2000 — 2006

Legal basis:

— Learning and Skills Act 2000

— Employment Act 1973, Section 2(1) and 2(2) substantiated by Section 25 of the Employment and Training Act 1998

— Section 5 & 6, Regional Development Agencies Act 1998

— Section 2 of the Employment and Training Act 1993

— Further and Higher Education Act 1992

Annual expenditure planned under the scheme:

Total ESF Expenditure

(Measures 1.7; 3.2; 3.3; 3.5 and 5.4)

GBP 20,16 milion

Annual expenditure

2003 GBP 5,33 million

2004 GBP 4,72 million

2005 GBP 5,09 million

2006 GBP 5,02 million

Maximum aid intensity:

35 % to large enterprises for specific training

45 % to SMEs for specific training

60 % to large enterprises for general training

80 % to SMEs for general training

(increased intensities apply as Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are an Article 87(3)(a) assisted area).

Where aid is provided to a disadvantaged worker as defined in Article 2(g) the aid intensity can be increased by 10 %

No one undertaking shall receive aid exceeding EUR 1 000 000

Date of implementation: 22 April 2003

Duration of scheme or individual aid award: 30 June 2007

Objective of the aid: The ESF element of the Objective 1 programme is a broad based training and development programme which aims to improve the employability of unemployed people including disadvantaged workers, to promote lifelong learning for those in and out of employment, to improve the skills base and adaptability of the employed labour force and reduce the level of disadvantage faced by women in the labour market. Training aid covered by this exemption

covers those measures in the programme that provide aid to employees and enterprises.

General Training

The majority of training supported through Objective 1 is general in nature. It is applicable not only to an employees' present or future position in the enterprise being assisted because the provision of qualifications provides transferable skills that substantially improve the employability of the employee concerned. Where training leads to the award of National Vocational qualifications and Key Skills Qualifications training will be considered to be general in nature.

Specific Training

Where training provided through Objective 1 is principally applicable to the employee's present or future position in the assisted enterprise and provides qualifications that are not transferable, the maximum aid intensities for specific training will apply.

Economic sectors concerned: All sectors.

Name and address of the granting authority:

Department for Work and Pensions
ESF Division
Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ
0114 267 7306

Other information:

Objective 1 Contact:
Janet Woolley
Government Office for the South West
Mast House
24 Sutton Road
Plymouth PL4 0HJ
01725 65022

Suspension by Italy of the public service obligations imposed on eighteen routes between the Sardinian airports and the main national airports, published on 10 December 2004 in *Official Journal of the European Union* C 306 ⁽¹⁾

(2005/C 161/06)

(Text with EEA relevance)

Following the decision of the Lazio Regional Administrative Court (TAR del Lazio) of 17 March 2005, Italy has decided to suspend from that date the public service obligations published on 10 December 2004 in *Official Journal of the European Union* C 306 in respect of the following 18 routes:

- Alghero/Rome and Rome/Alghero
- Alghero/Milan and Milan /Alghero
- Alghero/Bologna and Bologna/Alghero
- Alghero/Turin and Turin/Alghero
- Alghero/Pisa and Pisa/Alghero
- Cagliari/Rome and Rome/Cagliari
- Cagliari/Milan and Milan/Cagliari
- Cagliari/Bologna and Bologna/Cagliari
- Cagliari/Turin and Turin/Cagliari
- Cagliari/Pisa and Pisa/Cagliari
- Cagliari/Verona and Verona/Cagliari
- Cagliari/Naples and Naples/Cagliari
- Cagliari/Palermo and Palermo/Cagliari
- Olbia/Rome and Rome/Olbia
- Olbia/Milan and Milan/Olbia
- Olbia/Bologna and Bologna/Olbia
- Olbia/Turin and Turin/Olbia
- Olbia/Verona and Verona/Olbia

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 306, 10.12.2004, p. 6.

EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

OPINION OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

of 21 June 2005

at the request of the Council of the European Union on two proposed Council decisions on the exchange, assistance and training programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting (the 'Pericles' programme)

(CON/2005/22)

(2005/C 161/07)

1. On 10 May 2005 the European Central Bank (ECB) received requests from the Council of the European Union for opinions on two proposed measures: a proposal for a Council decision amending and extending Council Decision of 17 December 2001 establishing an exchange, assistance and training programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting (the 'Pericles' programme) (hereinafter the 'proposal'); and a proposal for a Council decision extending to the non-participating Member States the application of Council Decision amending and extending Council Decision of 17 December 2001 establishing an exchange, assistance and training programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting (the 'Pericles' programme) (hereinafter the 'parallel proposal')⁽¹⁾.
2. The ECB's competence to deliver an opinion is based on the first indent of Article 105(4) of the Treaty establishing the European Community. In accordance with the first sentence of Article 17.5 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Central Bank, the Governing Council has adopted this opinion.
3. The 'Pericles' programme was established by Council Decision 2001/923/EC of 17 December 2001 establishing an exchange, assistance and training programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting (the 'Pericles' programme)⁽²⁾. Regarding both the proposal and the parallel proposal, the ECB, in accordance with the view it expressed in its opinion when consulted on the draft of Decision 2001/923/EC⁽³⁾, would like to state that it strongly welcomes and fully supports initiatives the aim of which is to protect the euro against counterfeiting through training, exchange and assistance programmes for selected target groups.
4. The ECB notes that the proposal's main objective is to extend the duration of the 'Pericles' programme (currently scheduled to end on 31 December 2005) until 31 December 2011, with the same yearly budget of EUR 1 million. The proposal also provides for administrative support for cross-border investigations, subject to prior assessment by Europol, where such support is not available from other European institutions. It proposes increasing the Community's contribution in co-financing information exchanges and external measures from 70 % to 80 %, and adopting a flexible approach regarding limitations on the number of projects Member States are entitled to present per year for financing under the 'Pericles' programme.
5. As a preliminary point, Article 123(4) of the Treaty might be an insufficient legal basis for the proposal, in particular taking into account the extension of the programme to administrative support for cross-border investigations.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2005) 127 final contains both the proposal (reference 2005/0029(CNS)) and the parallel proposal (reference 2005/0030 (CNS)).

⁽²⁾ OJ L 339, 21.12.2001, p. 50.

⁽³⁾ Paragraph 3 of ECB Opinion CON/2001/31 of 9 October 2001 at the request of the Council of the European Union on a proposal for a Council Decision establishing a training, exchange and assistance programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting (the Pericles programme) (OJ C 293, 19.10.2001, p. 3).

6. Concerning the substance of the proposal, the ECB emphasises the importance of ensuring that the length of the extension of the 'Pericles' programme is linked to the timing of the introduction of the euro in the new Member States. Since the target dates for the introduction of the euro in most of the new Member States range from 2008 to 2010 ⁽¹⁾, the proposed extension of the 'Pericles' programme until 31 December 2011 takes account of increased future needs in terms of training, information exchanges and assistance. The proposed extension of the 'Pericles' programme is also to be welcomed as it is likely to coincide with, and consequently take into account, the issuance of the second series of euro banknotes, to take place towards the end of the decade.
7. By the same token, the increase in the Community's contribution in co-financing information exchanges and external measures, and the adoption of a flexible approach regarding limitations on the number of projects Member States are entitled to present for financing, are two further positive steps towards providing assistance where it is most needed.
8. Proper coordination of the 'Pericles' programme with existing Community or EU programmes, as well as with Europol and ECB projects, is essential, as indicated in Article 5 of Decision 2001/923/EC. It is to that effect that the proposal makes administrative support for cross-border investigations eligible for financing only if such support is not available from other European institutions. The proposal provides for a prior assessment by Europol of the financing of the administrative support. Given that the financing of administrative support might also relate to cross-border investigations concerning counterfeit euro banknotes, the Council could also consider involving the ECB in the assessment. The ECB observes that it would be beneficial that initiatives to be funded under the 'Pericles' programme be examined jointly by the Commission, the ECB and Europol, and that the decision to be taken require the assent of these three bodies, within the framework of the Steering Group already established with the aim of developing a common strategy against counterfeiting of the euro.
9. The ECB notes that the proposal only provides for a limited amendment of follow-up and evaluation procedures. Taking into account the extension of the 'Pericles' programme for a further six years, the ECB recommends including a more ambitious, open and transparent evaluation procedure in Article 1(8) and 1(9) of the proposal. The ECB should be fully involved in evaluation of the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the 'Pericles' programme so that it will be able to provide a well-qualified opinion to the Council in relation to any future extensions of the programme.

Done at Frankfurt am Main, 21 June 2005.

The President of the ECB
Jean-Claude TRICHET

⁽¹⁾ Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Central Bank - First report on the practical preparations for the future enlargement of the euro area, COM(2004) 748 final, 10 November 2004; available at: <http://europa.eu.int>.