Resolution on the Scheme for food distribution to the most deprived persons in the Union

2011/2722(RSP) - 07/07/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 548 votes to 52 with 26 abstentions a resolution on the Scheme for food distribution to the most deprived persons in the Union.

The resolution was tabled by the S&D, EPP, GUE/NGL, ALDE, and Greens/EFA groups.

It refers to the Scheme for food distribution to the most deprived persons in the Union, set up in 1987 by Council Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 under the common agricultural policy (CAP), which currently provides food aid for 13 million people suffering from poverty in 19 Member States and has distribution chains involving some 240 food banks and charities. Members note that following the ruling of the European Court of Justice in Case T-576/08, the Commission proposal for 2012 includes a sudden reduction in funding from EUR 500 million in 2011 to EUR 113 million in 2012. They stress that halting an existing and functioning aid scheme abruptly without prior notice or preparation has a major impact on the most vulnerable EU citizens and is not a reliable funding practice, and they call on the Commission and Council to develop a transitional solution for the remaining years of the funding period (2012 and 2013). Such a solution must avoid an immediate and sharp cutback in food aid as a result of the reduction in funding and ensure that people dependent on food aid do not suffer from food poverty.

Parliament notes that the Commission estimates that 43 million people in the EU are at risk of food poverty, and the economic and financial crisis and soaring food prices are putting more people at risk of food poverty. It also notes that that the Court stated that only the supply of food from intervention stocks shall be covered by this programme, as opposed to causing expenditure by buying food supplies on the market. It considers that, as a result of the Judgment, Article 2 of Regulation 983/2008, which dealt with additional purchases of food on the market, cannot be used as a legal basis for food distribution for the needy, and it calls on the Commission and the Council, therefore, to find a way of continuing the MDP (most deprived persons) scheme for the remaining years of the funding period (2012 and 2013) and the new funding period 2014 - 2020 on a legal basis that cannot be contested by the Court of Justice, maintaining the EUR 500 million annual financial ceiling so as to ensure that people dependent on food aid will not suffer from food poverty. The most appropriate legal basis should be found for the next financial programming period. Furthermore, Members feel that in the long term on all stakeholders to assess carefully the appropriateness of the food aid scheme, in particular as an element of the CAP, in the context of the new funding period as from 2014.

Lastly, Parliament recalls that one of the five objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy is the reduction of poverty and social exclusion in the European Union. It stresses that in order to combat poverty, an integrated policy is needed linking decent incomes and working and living conditions and access to all fundamental rights: political, economic, social and cultural. Food-aid measures could be one element in a larger integrated policy to combat poverty.