Euro-Mediterranean partnership: financial and technical measures to accompany (MEDA) the reform of economic and social structures

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The Committee unanimously adopted, with two abstentions, the report by Mr Enrique BAR(N CRESPO (PSE, E) on the financial and technical measures designed to support the reform of the economic and social structures of Mediterranean non-member countries and territories (MEDA). Before proceeding to the vote, the Chairman, Mr MATUTES, condemned the Council's attitude, since at best Parliament would in fact only be able to give a ruling at the plenary sitting in December. Mr MATUTES took the view that the code of conduct had not been respected and that a response was needed. Mr BAR(N, for his part, thought that the Committee should still vote on the report. After his report had been adopted, Mr BAR(N criticised the attitude of the Council, which wanted to reach a decision too quickly. By way of contrast, he pointed to the extensive work which had been carried out within Parliament, proof of which could be seen in the 90 or so amendments which had been examined. Substance of the report: The MEDA programme replaces various bilateral financial protocols which exist with countries in the Mediterranean basin (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Cyprus, Malta and the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank). The programme follows the example of the PHARE and TACIS programmes, particularly in respect of transparency and assessment. A new budget line is introduced in order to: - support economic transition and establish a Euro-Mediterranean free trade area, - promote the conditions for a better socio-economic balance and strengthen regional cooperation, and - promote good management. The Committee adopted two important amendments to the Commission's proposal: one relating to respect for democratic principles and human rights, so as to introduce conditionality to the granting of financial aid, the other relating to the rights of minorities. In addition, it was proposed to put greater emphasis on opportunities for promoting projects at local level in order at the same time to encourage cooperation between regional bodies. An amendment was also proposed and approved in session whereby the allocations made to each country would be entered under the total line of the budget.