

Social security: employed persons, self-employed persons and their families (amend. Regul. 1408/71/EEC)

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The commission's social action programme came up again at the meeting when the committee unanimously adopted a report by Mrs Ria OOMEN-RUIJTEN (EPP, NL) on the application of social security schemes to employees, the self-employed and members of their families who move between Member States within the Community. The report contains a batch of amendments to a Commission proposal updating Community legislation in this area. The amendments will improve social security cover for various categories of Community citizen. The committee had been holding up its adoption of the report because the Commission had wanted to deal with Parliament's amendments in its social action programme rather than incorporate them in the proposal currently before the committee. The committee, however, was not satisfied that this approach would bring sufficiently swift results. It wanted action now in the current proposal. Mrs OOMEN-RUIJTEN announced that a breakthrough had been made in the committee's negotiations with the Commission, which had now agreed in writing to incorporate three of Parliament's amendments in the current proposal. She said: "For the first time we have something down on paper from the Commission side. Before, it was just pious words". One committee amendment accepted by the Commission seeks to extend health care benefits to the subjects of third countries legally employed and resident in a Member State - as well as to their families - if they become temporarily resident in another Member State. The two other committee amendments accepted by the Commission seek to guarantee health care for frontier workers and pensioned frontier workers (and their families) in the Member State in which they work or used to work. At present frontier workers are shunted between the country in which they reside and the country where they work in an attempt to secure payment of the health care benefits to which they and their families are entitled. In many cases, neither country wants to assume responsibility for the payments. The amendments proposed by the committee are intended to help citizens who are suffering serious financial problems as a result of this situation. Other committee amendments, which the Commission proposes to deal with in different ways (eg by incorporating them in the social action programme), cover the possible introduction of a personal card providing Europe's citizens with health insurance cover throughout the Union and a provision designed to bring civil servants within the scope of the legislation.