Social protection in Europe. 1995 Report

1995/2289(COS) - 22/01/1997

The committee (chairman: Stephen HUGHES (PSE, UK)) adopted by 23 votes to 12 with 1 abstention the report by Mrs Barbara WEILER (PSE, D) (consultation procedure) on the Commission communication on the future of social protection. The committee wished to clarify the concept of social protection and took the view that the EU should play a more active role in this area with the Member States and that non-governmental organizations and welfare organizations should also be involved. The European Union's priority should be to ensure that Member States respect the commitment to a high level of social protection. The EU should assist in the gradual convergence of the various social protection systems. Coordination between national systems should help to remove barriers to free movement. The new needs of the labour market required an adjustment of the social security systems, taking account in particular of atypical work. Social protection could assist employment if social payments were seen as a social investment to promote employment and potential training for the individual. The MEPs were against the obligation to accept a given job in order to be able to continue to draw social payments. In addition, the committee advocated transferring the tax burden on labour to other sectors (such as energy consumption). Finally, the committee called for the social security system to continue to be based on the principle of solidarity. Consequently, supplementary pension schemes should not be used to reduce social protection.