Future of the European Social Fund (ESF)

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The Committee adopted a report on the future of the European Social Fund, prepared by Mrs Karin JÖNS (PES, DE). The report favours a drastic reduction in the objectives of the Structural Funds and the Community initiatives. In this respect, the Committee suggests that Objectives 3 and 4 should be combined into a single horizontal objective, and that only one Community initiative should be retained for human resources support, namely the one that promotes equality and opportunity between men and women. On the other hand, the Committee stresses the need to retain the current measures under Objective 3 Social Funds, which provide support to the young and long-term unemployed, women, the disabled and the socially excluded. The Committee presents a long list of measures, where Social Fund interventions should be strengthened, such as the promotion of local employment initiatives, support for the development of new organizations of working time, the development of vocational training, and the promotion of the mainstreaming of Social Fund initiatives. In all cases, social partners should be involved in negotiating the intervention framework between the Commission and the authorities of the Member States.