

Social exclusion: Community action programme 2001-2005 to encourage cooperation between Member States

2000/0157(COD) - 12/10/2000

The committee adopted the report by Ilda FIGUEIREDO (EUL/NGL, P) amending the Commission proposal under the codecision procedure (first reading). The committee endorsed the principles of the programme but felt that a number of additions and amendments were needed. In particular, it expressed surprise that the title of the programme referred only to social exclusion, and called for the word 'poverty' to be included therein. It also wanted particular attention to be paid to the social groups most affected by poverty, namely, children, the elderly, migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities, the homeless, people with disabilities and the unemployed. It also highlighted the plight of those living in certain regions, such as declining industrial areas, poor rural areas and the outermost regions. The programme, it felt, should also include important fields of action omitted in the Commission proposal, such as vocational qualifications and integration into working life, and should take account of the increasingly widespread phenomenon of the 'working poor', i.e. of social exclusion and poverty despite gainful employment. On the basis of the new open method of coordination, the committee felt that new forms of participation should be introduced, involving poor and excluded people themselves. Indicators and quantitative and qualitative assessment criteria should also be drawn up within a transnational framework, including criteria and indicators for child poverty. The committee accordingly proposed that a network be established linking national observatories or similar bodies so that the Commission could coordinate and make use of their work. It also called on the Commission to create a Reflection Group bringing together representatives of organisations with experience in the field and representatives of various EU institutions. The Group would assist in the preparation of the EU's annual round table conference on social exclusion and poverty. The annual findings and results of the programme should be included in the annual spring report on the economic and social situation in the EU in order to ensure that employment and social policy initiatives were placed on an equal footing with economic policy instruments. Lastly, the committee called for the funding for the programme to be raised from EUR 70m to EUR 100m.