Supporting national strategies for safe and sustainable pensions through an integrated approach

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The committee adopted the report by Carlo FATUZZO (EPP-ED, I) on the Commission communication. It stressed that the EU had a duty to ensure that every pensioner was able to lead a dignified and independent life and applauded the Commission's initiative on guaranteeing safe and sustainable pensions. The debate on pensions was essentially a social challenge with financial aspects and should not be restricted to the problem of funding. The committee welcomed the introduction of the open method of coordination on pensions on the basis of Community objectives and working methods. It called on the Barcelona European Council to to take concrete decisions on the substance of and a timetable for the open coordination method. Member States were requested to submit their national strategies by September 2002, after consulting all concerned, and to devise effective indicators and follow-up mechanisms to evaluate the reforms and modernisation of their pension systems. The European social partners, representatives of pensioners, social NGOs and women's organisations should all be involved in the open coordination process. MEPs emphasised that responsibility for any imbalances in pension schemes must not be laid at the door of workers and pensioners. Keeping pensions up with the cost of living, they argued, was more a question of distribution than a demographic problem. The committee expressed the hope that the current level of European pension provision would be maintained, reformed and increased. It called on Member States to maintain a well-functioning universal pensions system and to actively implement the Lisbon strategy, by means of a gradual approach to pensions. The Commission was asked to clearly distinguish funded pension schemes from purely individual pension or savings arrangements and to strongly promote the first type through the range of EU policy areas. The committee also called on the Commission to organise and support, in conjunction with the Member States, information and education campaigns on developments in the overhaul of pension schemes. The Commission was also asked to carry out a range of studies, including on social exclusion and pension management, a comparison between current pension systems in the EU and studies into the operation and impact of the various types of pension scheme (funded schemes, pay-as-you-go and combined systems). Lastly, the committee wanted Parliament to be fully involved in the entire process and therefore called for it to be consulted on the national strategic reports as well as the choice of agreed indicators.