Employment policy: strengthening the local dimension of the European strategy

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The committee adopted the report by Herman SCHMID (EUL/NGL, S) welcoming the Commission communication. It stressed the need for the integration of different levels of labour markets and for a "bottom-up" process in the European Employment Strategy so that local and regional knowledge and commitment can complement and improve the present policy process. MEPs took the view that the national parliaments and, where appropriate, the regional parliaments, should be mainly responsible for integrating European and local employment processes so as to ensure that policy commitments and budget allocations are properly coordinated. They also reminded the Commission that the local dimension of the employment strategy was equally relevant for the applicant countries The committee welcomed the development of local action plans for employment and job creation, which it said should be drawn up in close cooperation with regional and national labour market authorities. It also wanted the local plans to include gender equality measures to increase the range of employment opportunities available to women and facilitate the creation and management of businesses by women. The committee also welcomed the creation of local centres for labour market services and intermediate support structures, which it said should also be able to provide information and training about the various support programmes at European, national and regional level and assist in making applications for funding. There was support, too, for the Commission's proposal to organise a Local Development Forum in 2003 and MEPs wanted the Commission to look into whether such a forum should be organised on a annual basis. Lastly, the report called on the Commission to take further initiatives to promote the exchange of good local experiences.