Social cohesion: poverty and social exclusion, joint report on social inclusion

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The Commission adopted the report by Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL, P) on the Commission's communication. Members welcomed the first joint report on social cohesion. They concentrated on certain aspects of the exclusion phenomenon and made proposals for future activities. They restated the principle that the promotion of high levels of employment and social protection must be a priority of the EU. The mechanisms for redistributing opportunities and resources within society (such as the employment market and the social protection, education and training systems, etc.) needed to be improved to meet the needs of those most exposed to the risks of poverty and social exclusion. The committee felt it essential that political action to improve social integration should be implemented as close to the citizen as possible and should be backed by the necessary budget appropriations. Civil society should be able to be more intensely involved in the drafting and evaluation of national plans. The report called upon the Member States to provide all children with accessible, free and compulsory education for a minimum of 12 years to all children. The Commission and the Member States were called upon to reinforce the pilot projects geared to combating illiteracy and ensuring full command of each child's mother tongue and the learning of foreign languages. The Commission should support the establishment of 'second chance' schools and special teaching programmes for immigrants. Finally, particular attention should be paid to the situation of women with children.