The urban environment

1996/2147(INI) - 23/04/1998

An urban environment programme aimed at sustainable development was called by the Committee. Unanimously adopting an own-initiative report by Mrs Anita POLLACK (PES, UK), the committee also urged continued support for a campaign for sustainable cities, the development of comparable indicators of sustainability (enabling the performance of cities to be compared on a like basis) and the implementation of a scheme to audit sustainability. In March last year the committee held a public hearing on sustainable cities. Sustainable development is defined as development that delivers basic environmental, social and economic services to all residents of a community without threatening the viability of the natural, built and social systems upon which the delivery of these services depends. The report by Mrs Pollack pointed out that while 80% of the population of Europe live in urban areas, more than half the EU budget is spent in rural areas. It also noted that urban pollution did not stay within national borders. The report, which contains a motion for a resolution, acknowledged the relationship between lack of social cohesion and urban environmental problems, with European cities facing growing economic and social problems and environmental degradation. A partnership approach to the urban environment, involving local authorities, industry, NGOs, etc, should be developed and the European Commission should create an interdepartmental urban affairs unit. The report follows the publication last year of the Commission Communication "Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union". A previous own-initiative report drafted by Mr Ken COLLINS (PES, UK), current chairman of the Environment Committee, led to the publication by the European Commission in 1990 of its ground-breaking green paper on the urban environment.