Petition 395/2001 tabled by Mr Owen, on discrimination against the clergy

2002/2209(INI) - 08/10/2002

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by the Earl of STOCKTON (EPP-ED, UK) on the petition by Reverend Owen on discrimination towards priests in the UK. The petition concerned an English clergyman whose tenure of office was terminated in July 1999, leading to attempts to evict him and his family from their home, which was provided as tied accommodation for his office. The committee's report noted that the clergy's relationship with their employers in the UK was governed by common law and ecclesiastical law and that the provisions of Directive 91/533/EEC on an employer's obligation to inform employees of the conditions applicable to the contract or employment relationship did not apply to the clergy in the UK, although they did apply in some other EU countries. It regretted that certain types of working relationships were not covered by the employment protection afforded under EC law and that the individuals concerned did not always have sufficient legal or other recourse against decisions affecting them. Noting that directives referred to different categories of working people but that no standard definition was provided of the terms used, the committee called on the Commission to engage in a comprehensive review of its directives in the area of employment and come up with proposals to ensure that existing rights are extended to the widest possible range of workers, especially those dependent on a single employer or source of income for their livelihood.