Structural Funds. 7th annual 1995 Report

1996/2216(COS) - 10/06/1997

The committee unanimously adopted the proposal for a resolution on the seventh annual report on the Structural Funds. Having stressed that 1995 was an important year (this was the year in which Structural Fund interventions commenced, following approval of the majority of programmes in 1994), the rapporteur, Mr Novo Belenguer (ARE, E), examined several aspects of their operation in order to draw the Commission's attention to any weak points and encourage the initiatives which were most conducive to cohesion, which was the overriding objective of the Funds. Thus, with regard to implementation, the report adopted highlighted, for example, that the rate of implementation had been excellent, especially in the 4 beneficiary states of the Cohesion Fund and that, with respect to other objectives, the weakest rate had been in Objectives 3 and 4. The rapporteur therefore called on the Commission to evaluate the seriousness of the under-implementation of appropriations from the Structural Funds and then take the steps needed to carry Community expenditure forward to the level recommended at Edinburgh. Other topics addressed included: - complementarity with other Community policies: the rapporteur noted here that the horizontal nature of the cohesion policy set out in the Treaty "ran the risk of being neglected" and criticized the gaps in Community policy with regard to sexual equality and development aid in Member States for SMEs; - additionality: the report adopted insisted that the Commission take action to demonstrate observance of this principle, which it has not yet done with regard to 7 Member States; - coordination and partnership: given that the role of local authorities is still inadequate, the report suggested that efforts with regard to information at local level should be stepped up and the regions should be involved in the signature of planning documents, together with the Commission and the Member State; - monitoring and evaluation: while welcoming initiatives such as the publication of the "joint monitoring guide", and the new evaluation procedure, which makes provision for assistance from independent experts, the text adopted urges the Commission to continue work to simplify procedures and improve information for Fund beneficiaries. Finally, the European Parliament reiterated its right to co-legislate in all areas of cohesion, especially through the codecision procedure which applied to the Fund regulations.