Cohesion Fund. Annual 1996 Report

1997/2147(COS) - 22/04/1998

The committee adopted unopposed, with 3 abstentions, the motion for a resolution concerning the Commission's annual report on the Cohesion Fund for 1996. The chairman and rapporteur, Mr Miguel ARIAS CANETE (PPE,E), expressed himself satisfied with the budgetary implementation of the Fund, and particularly the balance secured in its management between the two intervention sectors, namely the environment and trans-European networks. However, as regards road transport, the motion for a resolution expressed concern that the excessive concentration of aid on this field might contradict the environmental dimension of Community transport policy; Parliament regretted that the Commission had not increased aid for railway construction and had reduced the aid intended for ports and airports. The text adopted called on the Commission to submit to Parliament the study it had commissioned on the overall socio-economic impact of the Fund to enable a broad debate to take place on the subject. The rapporteur supported the retention of the Fund, and called for its period of application to be extended beyond 1999 even if a beneficiary state achieved the conditions required to join EMU. Despite a certain slowness of implementation in the case of projects presented by regions or local authorities, the motion for a resolution encouraged participation by local and regional authorities, which would be able to contribute better to the future of the Fund on the basis of their regional development plans. The rapporteur welcomed the fact that no instance of fraud had been detected in Cohesion Fund projects in 1996. As the Fund had helped to create jobs in the beneficiary states, the resolution called for priority to be given to financing measures which would create long-term jobs; the rapporteur therefore proposed a more active policy to show public opinion the very positive impact of the Cohesion Fund.