Enhancing tourism's potential for employment: recommendations of the High Level Group

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The impasse in the Council over a multiannual framework programme for tourism came under fire in the committee, which adopted the report by Guido Viceconte (EPP/ED, I) on the conclusions and recommendations of the High-Level Group on Tourism and Employment. The committee regretted that the European Union's delay and indecision had prevented the introduction of a fully fledged Community policy on tourism as a sector capable of generating new jobs. Such a policy not only needed more effective coordination, but also better targeting of Community assistance to the tourist industry. A multiannual tourism programme had been blocked in Council for almost two years. Moreover, the lack of a legal base was preventing funding for the budget, which should serve to cover the expenditure required for the coordination of existing Community actions established in connection with other policies. Although the committee did not blame the Commission for the deadlock reached in Council, it thought that the Commission should at least ensure that there was more effective internal coordination. The report welcomed the prospect of a Commission department responsible for tourism concentrating on information, cooperation and partnership. It was also crucial that a list of criteria be drawn up applying to aid and to the various Community measures in the field of tourism which should reflect the specific (i.e. supra-national) nature of Community aid for tourism in strict compliance with the principle of subsidiarity. Priority should be given to job creation. There was also an urgent need for the adoption of a statistical system on tourism to provide Community, national and regional institutions, entrepreneurs and others with reliable information on tourism, related economic and social developments, employment trends and the potential for the creation of new jobs. Finally, special attention should be given to training, to taking positive fiscal measures in favour of small and medium-sized firms by reducing the burden of charges on labour and to developing the sector in the countries of the Mediterranean Basin.