Sustainable urban development: economic and social regeneration of cities and of neighbourhoods in crisis, URBAN

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The committee unanimously adopted the report by Arlene McCARTHY (PES, UK) on the Commission paper on the URBAN initiative. URBAN II was included in Agenda 2000 at the insistence of Parliament, which opposed the Commission's aim of abolishing the programme. However, it has only a small budget. The report therefore suggested that all other available means be employed, such as drawing on unused budget appropriations and altering the arbitrary figure of EUR 500 per inhabitant in each eligible area, as laid down in the guidelines, to take account of circumstances. However, the report approved the Commission's approach to the question of eligible areas and activities. It recommended an integrated approach to tackle several inter-related problems such as low educational achievement, poverty, social exclusion, crime and rundown environments with low levels of economic activity. As regards the preparation, presentation and management of the programmes, the committee believed the timetable of six months to be too ambitious. It also suggested that the Commission should play more of a strategic than a management role. The report called for Member States and local authorities to guarantee adequate resources for the programme, for environmental protection and crime prevention to be taken into account in the selection of projects, with particular emphasis on the problem of drugs, and for Parliament to be regularly informed of the results of the programme.