Social protection in Europe. 1995 Report

1995/2289(COS) - 19/02/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Barbara WEILER (PSE, D) on the Commission communication on the future of social protection Parliament supported the organization of a debate on social protection at European level. It first clarified the term social protection which covered not only social security (i.e. collectively provided security) but also social protection provided by government as well as schemes resulting from collective bargaining and private contributions. It took the view that the European Union should play a more active role in this area with the Member States and that non-governmental organizations and welfare organizations should also be involved. The Union should set as a priority seeking to ensure that Member States respect the commitment to a high level of employment and social protection. The Union should assist in the gradual convergence of the various social protection systems. Coordination between national systems should help to remove barriers to free movement. Convinced that the new needs of the labour market require an adjustment of the social security systems, Parliament considered that social protection should not be less favourable for workers (and in particular women) with atypical work contracts. Social protection could assist employment if the social payments are seen as a social investment to promote employment and the education potential of the individual. Parliament welcomed the trend to reduce contributions of employers and employees on low salaries and called on the Member States to diversify their sources of financing so as to guarantee the financing of social security (e.g. a carbon dioxide tax, a tax on economic activities, etc.). While encouraging saving by citizens to cover social risks, Parliament did not favour different levels of social protection and thus an undermining of solidarity. These supplementary schemes should not be used to cut pension schemes. Parliament pointed out the need to incorporate the social protocol in the Treaty and to apply the procedure for majority voting for matters relating to this protocol. It also called for a social dimension to be included in EMU and for monitoring of the adverse effects of policies to reduce expenditure on social protection programmes. Parliament considered that these were prerequisites for safeguarding the European social protection model. Lastly, Parliament pointed out the need to include social and environmental clauses in multilateral trade agreements.