Social protection in Europe. Report 1997

1998/2088(COS) - 12/03/1999 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The Parliament adopted its Resolution on the Commission's 'Social Protection in Europe 1997' report drafted by Mr. Bartho PRONK (EPP, NL). It urged the Commission to use the evaluation announced in its social action programme for 1998-2000 of the implementation of Council Recommendation 92/442/EEC to set in motion a process of voluntary alignment of objectives and policies in the area of social protection modelled on the European employment strategy. It called on the Commission to present, by way of preparation for this process, an action plan on social protection in which - the effects of different social protection systems is set out; - the correlation between increased productivity and the evolution of social security systems is set out; - a figure is put on the economic damage arising from the evasion of social security contributions; - inconsistencies in the design of taxation and social protection systems are identified; - the criteria for a benchmarking process in the area of social protection systems are defined; - a code of conduct for avoiding harmful competition via social security systems is presented, through which closer co-operation between the Member States is ensured in these areas; - on the basis of Article 137(3) of the Amsterdam Treaty (consolidated version), minimum standards are proposed for certain areas of social protection; - on the basis of a uniform method and definition for determining the poverty line, guidelines are presented for determining the acceptable minimum level of subsistence in the Member States. The Commission was called upon to submit a proposal for a Directive setting minimum standards of contractual social protection for all forms of atypical work and to initiate consultation between the social partners on the issue of flexible transition to retirement with the aim of securing either a framework agreement or collective bargaining agreements at the appropriate level of social partners. The Council was called upon to include in the employment policy guidelines specific targets for the expansion of child-minding facilities and facilities for relatives in need of care. In this connection, the Commission was called upon to look at the possibility of setting binding common minimum standards in this area. With respect to pension systems, the Parliament urged the Commission and the Member States, within the limits of their competences, to attempt, in the medium term, to co-ordinate social and retirement pension schemes and eliminate inconsistencies between employment insurance and social insurance provisions; it called on the Member States to improve their work on ensuring mutual recognition of social and retirement pension schemes by implementing existing legislation. It called on the Commission to press for the adoption of a code of conduct on the tax treatment of pension contributions and pension schemes and on the taxation of profits of pension funds and, on this basis, to put forward a proposal adapting Directive 98/49/EC on safeguarding supplementary pension rights of employed and self-employed persons moving within the Community by regulating the transferability of entitlements from supplementary pension schemes. It called on the Commission to look at the separate systems of social protection to see how an individual approach to entitlements can be implemented without persons who on family grounds interrupt or do not engage in gainful activity being placed at a disadvantage. Lastly, the EP called on the Commission to prepare proposals to combat discrimination and social exclusion on the basis of Articles 1les 13 and 137 of the Amsterdam Treaty (consolidated version) in line with the results of its report on the implementation of Council Recommendation 92/441, and, as a matter of urgency, to present a coherent plan for drastically reducing the number of people in the European Union living below the poverty line.