Regional policies of the European Union: implementation in Austria, Finland and Sweden

1996/2116(COS) - 16/05/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Reinhard RACK (PPE, A) on regional policies in Austria, Finland and Sweden, Parliament welcomed the efforts made by those countries since the adoption of the 41 programming documents (SPDs) and expressed its satisfaction at the speed with which the SPDs were approved. However, it regretted the delays in the approval of the Community initiatives and called for a reduction in their number in cases where bureaucratic procedures would be out of all proportion to the aid to be granted. It pointed out that there were major disparities in these Member States, in particular as regards development and welcomed the emphasis placed on employment, protection of the environment and equal opportunities in the implementation of regional policies. It also expressed its pleasure at the share of the funding allocated to promoting the Information Society (especially in Austria, where the Information Society is promoted in disadvantaged rural regions). It was extremely concerned at the high levels of youth unemployment in Finland (29.9%) and Sweden (19.4%) and called for measures to be taken to create sustainable jobs for young people, to modernize existing forms of training and apprenticeship and to promote labour market diversification and innovation. It requested the Commission to take appropriate action to achieve this in the context of the present framework of Objective 3 (Employment). At the same time, it emphasized the importance attached to inter-regional and cross-border cooperation in the new Member States and welcomes the efforts to cultivate partnership which have been made in those countries. It would, however, like to see more done to involve local and regional authorities in project implementation (the bottom-up principle). In this regard, it points out that regional and local authorities in Sweden and Finland would like to be more closely involved in the establishment, approval and implementation of the programmes and therefore calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure that the subsidiarity principle is respected so as to ensure that central government is not too dominant. Lastly, Parliament calls for: - the publicity given to participation by the European Structural Funds to be improved so as to enhance the visibility of Community measures in the countries concerned, - simplification in the administration of the Structural Funds towards greater clarity in the criteria of eligibility, better internal coordination on the part of the Commission, the abolition of multi-fund support and more rapid processing, - reform of the administrative structures in the new Member States in order to simplify procedures and achieve greater transparency, - for proportionality between the amount of administrative work and the benefits to be taken into account, - a flexible approach to co-financing through increased private-sector participation.