Cohesion Fund. Annual 1996 Report

1997/2147(COS) - 28/05/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting by 175 votes to 166 with 111 abstentions the report by Mr Miguel ARIAS CAÑETE (PPE,E), the European Parliament observes that the cohesion fund has not yet brought about real convergence among all Member States and that while some countries in receipt of cohesion fund existence have achieved national convergence making them eligible to join the monetary union, they will have to remain beneficiaries of the cohesion fund until the final date (31 December 1999) contained in the regulation. It calls on the Commission and Council to extend the period of application of the cohesion fund beyond 1999 (but only for those Member States not belonging to the EMU) so as to achieve a major reduction in regional imbalances and create a larger number of jobs in particular for young people, women and the long-term unemployed. Parliament considers that budgetary implementation for 1996 was satisfactory and welcomes the fact that no instances of fraud was detected in 1996. It also welcomes progress in achieving a balance between the funds to intervention sectors, the environment and trans-European transport networks. It also welcomes efforts to concentrate investment in the environment sector by implementing Community directives on the supply and treatment of water and treatment of waste. It calls for an objective environmental impact assessment regarding the projects financed by the fund. In the field of transport while welcoming improvements in road infrastructure carried out with aid from the cohesion fund it takes the view that the concentration aid on road transport is excessive and contradicts the aim of incorporating the environmental dimension in Community transport policy. After drawing attention to the cohesion fund's important contribution to creating jobs (over 57 000 direct jobs and over 17 100 indirect jobs created in 1996) and calling for priority to be given to measures creating long-term jobs Parliament calls for greater attention to be paid to those regions of the Member States where the most serious imbalances exist Finally, Parliament stresses the need to strengthen cooperation with the regional and local authorities and the social partners and to introduce a more vigorous public relations policy to highlight the very positive effects of cohesion fund action in the beneficiary states.