Structural Funds. 8th annual Report 1996

1997/2261(COS) - 28/05/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Christa KLASS (PPE) on the eighth annual report on the Structural Funds, the European Parliament expresses its satisfaction at the take-up of appropriations in 1996 (98% of available commitments and 95% of available payments) while calling on the Member States to respect the three-month deadline for transferring funds to final beneficiaries. Parliament adopted an amendment expressing its concern at the snowball effect of unused appropriations. In April 1998 commitment appropriations for the 1999 budget totalled ECU 3171 million. Parliament accordingly stresses the need to table by July 1998 a report on the general situation regarding the funds proposing modifications and any improvements to previously adopted programmes. It also expresses concern at the increase in irregularities with financial implications and considers it unacceptable that according to information from the Member States in 1996 ECU 64 million were misappropriated. Parliament expresses its satisfaction at the fact that the percentage of financing by the European Investment Bank in aid of regional development is again on the increase. It notes however that verification of compliance with the principle of additionality is not being carried out satisfactorily. Similarly, Parliament regrets the continuing problems with the implementation of the partnership principle, particularly as regards the involvement of local authorities and social partners. Referring to Article 130b of the EC Treaty, under which other Community policies must contribute to achieving the objective of economic and social cohesion, Parliament stresses the need to obtain tangible results in this respect. Noting that there are continuing shortcomings with monitoring and evaluation, Parliament is particularly critical of the Commission's approach to the evaluation of large-scale projects, commissioning expensive studies with such divergent results that it was impossible to draw any conclusions. Finally, it stresses once more the importance of research and technological development and urges that the fifth framework research programme take into account economic and social cohesion.