Cohesion Fund. Annual 1995 Report

1996/2176(COS) - 26/06/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In its adoption of the report by Mr Honório NOVO (GUE/NGL, P) on the Commission's annual report on the Cohesion Fund for 1995, Parliament considers the budgetary implementation of the Fund to have been satisfactory, and welcomes the degree of balance achieved between the Fund's two areas of assistance, the environment and the trans-European transport networks (except in Portugal and Greece). It nonetheless regrets the excessive weight given to road projects within the trans-European transport networks sector, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase the funding earmarked for railways, ports and airports. Parliament reiterates its support for the Commission's strategy of boosting the concentration of aid in the environment sector to reflect the Community directives on drinking water supply, waste water treatment and waste; it believes that more effort must be made to fund projects reflecting this strategy in Spain, but acknowledges that other environmental projects might be accepted - for example, to combat erosion and desertification and support reafforestation, nature conservation and habitat protection, areas to which it feels insufficient attention is being paid. Parliament stresses the need to place greater emphasis on sewage treatment measures. Parliament also calls for support for projects implementing the habitats directive and the Nature 2000 network, and for further projects to prevent pollution from industrial sources and develop modern waste disposal, treatment and management systems in regions where these are currently inadequate Endorsing the Commission's decision to practise greater flexibility in approving certain projects involving sums of under ECU 10 m, (especially for less-developed and ultra-peripheral regions), Parliament wishes to see the Commission cease to favour a few big projects over a large number of small ones. Parliament believes that: - small projects are easier for the public to recognize; - by their very nature, environmental projects are often on a small scale; - such projects tend to have a favourable cost/benefit ratio. Noting the increase in regional disparities within Europe, Parliament believes the impact on these disparities of the way in which the Cohesion Fund is implemented should be investigated; it stresses, however, that the Cohesion Fund is not a regional fund. Parliament calls on the Commission and Council to guarantee that a Cohesion Fund will continue after 1999, and recalls the need for a more active policy on publicizing the Fund. In particular, it recommends that the Commission should consider involving the private sector in the Fund. Finally, Parliament calls for the Fund to include the objectives of sustainable development and for efforts to be made over the submission and acceptance of requests for assistance, in view of the delays which have occurred in some cases.