

Urban development: guidelines for a urban agenda in the Union

1997/2097(COS) - 02/07/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Pasqualina NAPOLETANO (PSE, I) on the communication from the Commission, 'Towards an urban agenda in the European Union', Parliament noted the urgent need to formulate a European urban strategy which, in addition to economic and social aspects, would be concerned with sustainable development. Such a strategy was an indispensable part of a broader spatial planning policy. By seeking a new equilibrium between urban centres and the countryside, a contribution should be made to the implementation of a balanced regional policy which would combat the rural exodus and ensure the vitality of the countryside. It was vital to improve knowledge of the true situation of Europe's cities; Parliament therefore reiterated its call for the creation of a monitoring centre for spatial development, which could gather the necessary information. In order to gain a better understanding of environmental aspects of urban policy, Parliament called on the Commission to devise and develop comparable sustainability indicators and promote activities of networks active with regard to the urban environment. Criteria regarding efforts to combat levels of environmental pollution which pose a danger to public health should be included in the Structural Fund regulations. Parliament stressed the urgent need to develop public transport systems accessible to all which could persuade the public not to use private transport. In the social field, the Structural Funds should support local employment initiatives. In view of the increase in the number and size of urban areas with social and economic problems and of pockets of poverty, Parliament wished planning policies to prevent property speculation, help young people to acquire a home of their own and facilitate the integration of older people, the disabled and immigrants. It stressed the possible role of European cities as laboratories for social innovation and the need to promote the involvement of young people in local employment initiatives, and employment of women. In the field of civil liberties, Parliament supported unrestricted application of the provisions of the Treaty on the right to vote for Community residents. Stressing the integrating function which urban areas could perform, it called for training of social workers in order to combat disintegration of the social fabric and to combat racism and xenophobia. Effective crime prevention measures should be adopted. As crime was closely related to the problem of drug dependence, Parliament suggested structural measures, measures related to the situation, and measures related to the criminal in the context of a coherent interdisciplinary approach to fighting urban crime. The reform of the Structural Funds should help to reinforce the principle of partnership. Parliament noted the Commission's proposal to introduce a new sphere of intervention under Objective 2 for urban areas affected by serious pockets of poverty and social exclusion (new Objective 2). However, it emphasised that the new area of application of Objective 2 did not sufficiently tackle urban problems and called for Objective 1 structural policy to do more in this field. It called for the URBAN Community initiative to be extended under the reform of the Structural Funds, on the basis of cooperation and partnership between urban areas and various small and medium-sized cities. Parliament believed it necessary, as part of Community cooperation between cities, to develop cultural networks and sports networks, and to promote diversity of religious observance.