Amsterdam Treaty: increased cooperation

1997/2243(COS) - 16/07/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mr Friedhelm Frischenschlager (ELDR, A) by 372 votes to 75 with 33 abstentions, Parliament wished this closer cooperation to be 'exceptional and temporary' for the sake of the coherence of EU policies. It stressed compliance with the conditions for recourse to the provisions on closer cooperation, in particular: respect for the acquis communautaire and the single institutional framework, use only as a last resort, respect for the rights and interests of non- participating Member States and neutrality with respect to conditions of competition between Member States. Parliament considered that closer cooperation might lend itself better to implementing action programmes in areas such as police and judicial cooperation, industrial policy, research, education, vocational training or the environment, than to enactment of legislation and warned against the option provided by the Amsterdam Treaty for Member States to oppose recourse to the provisions on closer cooperation for important reasons of national policy, considering that this could only be an exceptional option of last resort in cases of political emergency. The plenary rejected Paragraph 12 of the report calling on the Commission to propose deleting this quasi-veto in its report on a reform of all the Treaties. The process of engaging in any closer cooperation would have to be subject to democratic scrutiny by Parliament. In first pillar matters, the Commission must undertake to withdraw any proposal for closer cooperation where Parliament delivered a negative opinion. Where close cooperation took place, the principle of the unity of the budget must be adhered to. Parliament also considered that it would be unrealistic to expect that closer cooperation could provide a suitable institutional framework for meeting the main challenges that lay head for European integration (enlargement and deepening the economic aspects of EMU). Consequently, it called on the Commission to make a study of the potential applications of closer cooperation with a view to entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty.