Environment and employment: building a sustainable Europe

1997/2287(COS) - 16/07/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs HULTHEN (PSE, S) on the Commission communication on the environment and employment strategy, Parliament approved the broad outlines of the strategy proposed. It considered however that it should be more specific and called on the Commission to draw up a more detailed definition of environmentally-driven growth and environment-related employment. It called on the Commission to review the scope for generating environmentally-driven growth in the various regions of the Union. It also called for a qualitative assessment comparing the quality and stability of jobs in this sector. A reliable mechanism should also be created to assess the number and stability of the jobs created in this sector under the Structural Funds. Parliament also proposed the setting up of a European forum for environmental technology and the establishment of a 'Partnership for sustainable growth' to draw up a coherent programme of action in this context. The Commission should consider the possibility of submitting an action plan for setting up regional and interregional partnerships involving industry and local authorities. The same principle should be applied to the applicant countries. Noting that structural policies were able to stimulate environmental policy, it stressed that the fundamental priorities of the funds should be geared towards coordinated action in favour of the environment, including 'green jobs'. It also called on the Commission to: - take greater account of the impact of investment on the environment in the allocation of Community budget funds, in particular by further greening of the budget, - work out a common system for measuring and assessing environmental investment and its impact on employment, - develop training and research in this field, together with the Member States, - submit a proposal seeking to increase the scope for taking account of environmental criteria in public procurement, - introduce user-friendly environmental information about technology, energy and transport, - promote, with the Member States, the use of renewable energy sources, - shift the emphasis in EU waste policy from incineration towards recycling, - shift, in its transport policy, towards water and rail transport modes, - support organic farming, - set up a European environmental technology forum. At the same time it called for changes in taxation penalising activities which used up natural resources or damaged the environment and giving tax advantages to those promoting sustainable development and the creation of 'green' jobs. Parliament also considered that revenue from taxation of environmentally harmful activities could be invested in environmental protection and employment stimulation. It also called on the Council to stop blocking the Commission proposal for a directive on the introduction of a tax on carbon dioxide emissions and energy. Lastly Parliament stressed the need for aid to innovative SMUs in the environmental sector and the need to establish common environmental standards for building materials.