Reduction in working time

1995/2085(INI) - 18/09/1996 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the report by Mr Michel ROCARD (PSE, F) on the reduction and organization of working time by 300 votes to 56 with 19 abstentions. In its resolution, the European Parliament considered that available work could be better distributed by: - reducing the working week; - increasing the number of part-time jobs with social protection; - gradually abolishing overtime; - introducing longer sabbaticals; - guaranteeing better performance by introducing short breaks during the day; - reorganizing working time. Reducing working times would allow the number of salaried employees to be maintained and new employees to be recruited. The European Parliament considered that Member States' expenditure could be reduced considerably because a reduction in working times would bring about a significant reduction in unemployment both as the result of direct recruitment and by avoiding redundancies. It therefore called on the Commission and the Member States to examine these potential savings in order to determine if they would benefit companies (savings could be used to compensate loss of salary either through direct subsidy or by reducing social security contributions for the first 32 hours' work (for example by 1 ecu per hour) and by increasing contributions on the hours worked thereafter (by 4 ecus per hour). At a general level, the European Parliament called on the Commission to publish within six months an analysis of the experiences in each Member State as the result of reducing working times. It hoped that the social partners would examine different working times and notify their opinions within the framework of their multiannual work programmes. It also hoped that, if the studies drafted by the Commission and the assessments carried out by the Member States (on reducing state expenditure) were conclusive, the partners would consult in order to finalize flexible agreements, especially in the sectors not currently covered by the "working time" directive. It also hoped that they would start negotiations on gradually replacing overtime payments with compensatory time off, thereby enabling several million jobs to be created. Given that these measures would result in a considerable increase in leisure time, the report suggests that the Member States and the Commission examine decentralized strategies for support for lifelong learning, sporting and cultural activities and community social work. Finally, it reiterated that all workers should be placed on an equal footing, irrespective of the working time arrangements which they chose.