Education and training schemes in developing countries

1994/2135(COS) - 13/10/1995 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Maren G·NTHER (PPE, D), Parliament called for all children, irrespective of sex or origin, to have access to appropriate basic education and to at least five years of school education. Efforts should also be intensified with a view to ensuring full adult literacy and the education of women, who until now have been neglected. Parliament called for the introduction of compulsory school attendance without exception and the use of financial incentives (such as compensation benefits and grants) in order to deter people from using children as a source of labour. In this respect Parliament recommended that appropriate measures should be taken to combat the problem of child labour, particularly by guaranteeing parents a minimum income which might enable their children to be sent to school. It called for priority to be given to those measures which are aimed at strengthening decentralized education systems and the participation of local authorities. Teaching objectives and methods should take account of the cultural characteristics and the natural, economic and social realities of the developing countries. Cooperation between the countries concerned should also be supported through the use of twinning and school and university exchanges between the institutions within the main regions. Any consideration of basic education should include those children who are living in disaster areas, in deprived areas and in refugee camps. If possible, refugees and displaced persons should be educated in their own language in order to make it easier for them to return to their homeland. As far as teaching is concerned, priority should be given to basic and primary education which receives public funding without discrimination towards young girls or children who belong to the underprivileged sections of the population. Parliament stressed the importance of mobile schools and teaching to help itinerant peoples and children living on the street. It was important for parents, teachers and local organizations to be actively involved in the setting-up of optimum education systems. Parliament advocated establishing a link between primary education and the acquisition of elementary knowledge of vital aspects such as health (particularly perinatal care), diet, the environment, handicrafts, agriculture, manual work and human rights. From the first school years teaching should be given in the children's mother tongue and in the official language of the country. Parliament condemned the policy of countries which refused to give this right to children of different national origin. Special attention should be paid to the transfer of know-how in those areas of work which are traditionally the domain of women (the small-trade sector, food production and processing). Special support should be given to women who wish to join the labour market, to enter the civil service and local authorities and to set up their own businesses. Parliament emphasized the importance of cooperating with NGOs which are able to adapt education programmes to the needs of the local population. In this respect, it was of the opinion that the measures taken by the Community and the Member States in the area of training should result in a level of progress which can be sustained in the long term by the local administration. Furthermore, it thought that emphasis should be placed on promoting innovation in the field of education, particularly in order to improve access to this sector (for example through the use of distance learning). Parliament also underlined that the experience acquired by the Community in this area could serve as a basis for the exchange of information with these countries and for the implementation of programmes being carried out by NGOs. All actions taken in the field of education call for long-term policies if they are to have a positive impact. Parliament recommended that a percentage of the EDF appropriations be devoted exclusively to education and training and felt that it was worth examining the possibility of converting certain developing countries' debt repayments into "education appropriations".