The role of cooperatives in the growth of women's employment

1997/2250(INI) - 18/09/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mrs Maria Paola COLOMBO SVEVO (PPE, I) on the role of cooperatives in women's employment, the European Parliament considered that social economy organisations play a leading role in national and local economic life. Noting the growth in this sector over recent years, it considered that cooperatives based on participation and adaptability could help to create jobs for women in the service sector, given that they: - permit the conversion of traditionally female skills and experience into a business asset; - offer a wide range of jobs; - represent a stage in a woman's career; - make it easier to reconcile work and family life and provide high-quality affordable services. Parliament drew attention to potential risks such as precarious, underpaid work in this sector. It considered that the social economy should be promoted by strengthening the Community legislative framework and by making the necessary financial resources available. It called on the Commission to carry out a study of the size of the social economy, the characteristics of the models of social enterprise in the Member States and the impact of the social economy on women's employment. It also called for re-launch of the Community programme to promote the social economy and a regulatory framework which guarantees legal clarity. It also called for part of the funds available under new budget Title B5-5 (labour market and technological innovations), which has been allocated ECU 450 million over a period of three years (1998-2000), to be earmarked for women in social economy undertakings. Parliament also called on the Commission: - to take due account, with a view to promoting equal opportunities, of the social economy in all measures geared to SMEs and employment; - to include comments under the heading "third system and unemployment" scheduled for 1999, on the contribution made by this sector to action against unemployment and the raising of women's skill levels; - to step up the provision of organisational support so as to promote consortia, information networks and the establishment of social economy agencies; - to develop a motor role in the dissemination of best practices; - to study the incidences and causes of the black economy in the Member States; - to set up pilot projects on the role of cooperatives in integrating immigrants in the labour market; - to set up information sites on the Internet for female entrepreneurship; - to amend the Sixth VAT Directive to permit the application of a reduced rate to labour-intensive services; - to adjust Community public procurement legislation to take account of the specific characteristics of the social economy. The Member States are called upon to provide: - specific measures to encourage the social economy; - a legal framework encouraging the organisation of the social economy; - financial and fiscal incentives for social enterprises (including lower VAT); - easier access to loans; - financial incentives for the setting up of women's cooperatives.