Services of general interest in Europe

1996/2183(COS) - 17/12/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Angela Theodora BILLINGHAM (PSE, UK) Parliament welcomed the communication from the Commission on services of general interest, as it moved towards proper recognition of public services. Parliament welcomed in particular the fact that the Treaty of Amsterdam (new Article 7d) recognized the notion of services of general interest as one of the common values of Europe, while asserting that the Community and its Member States should oversee the operation of these services within their respective powers. It then called on the Commission to ensure the application of Community competition law to services of general interest. It also pointed out the need for forms of cooperation firstly among the Member States and secondly between the public and private sectors with regard to services of general interest with a view to promoting job-creating projects and developing research. It called on the Commission to define the scope and nature of services of general interest, together with the principles underlying them and also to specify the level of services necessary for accomplishing EU objectives and the regulatory framework needed. It called in particular on the Commission to draw up a timetable for translating the new treaty objectives into measures, specifying for each sector the level of service which should be guaranteed to citizens, the special rights which might be required for provision of these services and the regulatory provisions which should be adopted at Community level. Parliament also called on the Commission to draw up a charter of principles for services of general economic interest which would contain their justification and the principles of these services, the type of missions and rights to be given to operators and a list of sectors where the notion should apply. The Commission was also called on to consult regularly representatives of public service undertakings, competitors and the respective workforces during the process of drawing up its projects and proposals and to designate one member as having special responsibility for public services. It was also necessary to ensure a balanced consideration of the concerns of both competition policy and services of general interest.