Rural development : guidelines for the the Community LEADER+ initiative

1999/2185(COS) - 15/02/2000 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the report by Mr. Giovanni Procacci (ELDR, It) on the resolution on the LEADER+ rural development programme by 498 votes for to 3 against, with 15 abstentions. It urges the Commission to adopt a flexible approach in the light of the CAP reforms and to consult fully with local representatives. In addition, the European Parliament stresses that an action plan must cover a large number of initiatives and proposals, so as to deal with local problems and meet local expectations. It calls upon the Commission and national and regional authorities to make their own accounting requirements known in order to simplify financial management of Leader +. The European Parliament also believes that the Commission should establish more detailed timetables, deadlines and procedures, to be binding on all parties in order to discourage the defaults and delays caused in large part by lack of efficiency at the level of the institutional intermediaries. Furthermore, the EP calls on the Commission to submit to the Parliament, as soon as possible, an evaluation report on Leader II and also inform it of any conclusions and implications relevant to the Leader + programme. This will also be useful for special Community programmes, particularly in order to take advantage in the future of the experience obtained and to help projects which have been concluded successfully under Leader as a whole develop into specialised EU programmes. Moreover, the EP considers that the Commission should assume the tasks intended for the Observatory of Rural Areas as part of its duties and ensure that the progress of Leader + is mentioned. There were also a number of references made in the text to the importance of rural communities and the importance of 'bottom-up' participation in initiatives. In conclusion, the European Parliament stresses that the guidelines for Leader + must now be adopted as quickly as possible, so that local action groups in the Member States can draw up their projects and submit them in good time for approval to the Commission. In addition, this is to ensure that there is sufficient take-up of the funds made available in the budget before the end of 2000.