Illiteracy and social exclusion

2001/2340(INI) - 07/02/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the resolution by Mrs Marie-Thérèse HERMANGE (EPP-ED, F) by 367 to 1 with 6 abstentions. It calls on the Commission, in connection with the employment guidelines and the open methods of cooperation used in the fight against poverty and exclusion, and also in relation to education and training, to propose specific indicators and benchmarks relating to illiteracy and to do this in close cooperation with all the social players, particularly. Moreover, it calls on the Commission to note that illiteracy and innumeracy should not in future be considered separately in line with the initiative taken by the Lisbon European Council of working towards a 'knowledge-based' economy. It also requests that the Commission submit to Parliament and the Council, as soon as possible, a Green Paper on illiteracy, innumeracy and social exclusion, together with a timetable for tangible objectives along the lines of the social agenda, precisely defining the measures to be taken at European level. The Commission is called upon to submit to Parliament a Green Paper and an action plan based on Articles 137 and 150 of the Treaty, comprising the following elements at least: - a common definition of the various forms of illiteracy, based on indicators which are compatible and consistent across all the Member States, so as to enable a forward assessment to be made of the current situation of illiterate people and the medium-term trends stemming from changes affecting all aspects of socioeconomic and family life; - open coordination of policies to combat illiteracy with policies on equal access for all to fundamental rights and on employment and social protection, nondiscrimination and equal opportunity, and lifelong learning and research; - annual assessment of the impact of Community and national policies on illiteracy and social policy with the persons concerned; - the active participation by all the social players concerned, and particularly the most deprived people themselves, in Community policies to combat illiteracy; - the setting up of a network for the exchange of best practice, which should be accessible to all parties concerned, and the setting up of a statistical database on illiteracy in the Union and the candidate countries; - specific support for the EU regions which are most affected by this form of social exclusion and for the applicant countries, with a view to drawing up literacy programmes coordinated with vocational training; - the acknowledgement of the fact that migrant workers literate in their own mother tongue should not be considered illiterate on the basis of not being able to work and communicate in the official language of the Member State, and that appropriate training should be provided to cater for their need to be fully included into society; - assistance to the candidate countries to analyse their needs and implement literacy programmes; - the revision of existing directives or regulations with a view to incorporating in the Union's policies the objective of combating illiteracy and social exclusion; - mainstreaming within the EU's policy areas of the fight against illiteracy as a cause of social exclusion. The resolution calls on the Commission to submit to the European Parliament and the Council, as soon as possible, a proposal for a recommendation to the Member States including, inter alia, the following points: the development of literacy courses in all vocational training programmes and actions for adults; the definition of priority criteria to guarantee access to training and personal development programmes for adults with poor basic skills; the promotion at local, regional and national level of initiatives such as mobile libraries and learning support; the consultation and active involvement of all concerned parties in the definition and implementation of programmes to combat illiteracy at each level of decision making; close coordination between the relevant services responsible to national, regional and local level for implementing actions under the Structural Funds, those responsible for policies to combat social exclusion and integration into working life and those responsible for policies to combat illiteracy; recognition that computer illiteracy may also lead to social exclusion. The resolution Calls on the Commission and the Council to set up a European illiteracy monitoring centre at the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) in Thessaloniki with a brief to establish training courses and diplomas at European level. Lastly, the Parliament calls on the Commission to submit to Parliament, each year, a written report, incorporating statistical data, of progress towards the objectives of combating illiteracy and social exclusion, in close cooperation with persons with poor literacy skills who have participated in training programmes.