Developing countries, education and training: objectives and priorities in reducing poverty

2002/2177(COS) - 15/05/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Margrietus VAN DEN BERG (PES, NL) on poverty reduction in developing countries. (Please see the summary dated 23/04/03.) Parliament emphasised that universal, compulsory, free, public and high-quality primary education, which provides children with at least six years of primary education, is the foundation for an education strategy which encompasses secondary, tertiary, vocational and adult education. Parliament called on the Commission to set a budgetary target for education, as the budgetary authority did in 2001. It is imperative to attain the 35% target for social sector spending, including education, which was agreed in 2001; there should be clear time indicators within the current framework between now and 2015. Parliament went on to call for reform of IMF and World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers so as to ensure that they support, rather than undermine, free, public, high-quality education and take account of the specific nature of each situation and region while subordinating technical considerations to the overall objectives of sustainable development and the fight against poverty. It agreed that responsibility for the quality of education should lie with the developing countries themselves. Standards should be agreed with those countries for acceptable girls' enrolment and completion rates for each year, with a view to closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education. If this fails, the Commission will need to consider whether budget support is the most appropriate mechanism for achieving the gender equality Millennium Development Goal in that country. If countries do not comply, mechanisms should exist to induce them to do so, including the possibility of budget support being suspended. Parliament also agreed that there are many different ways in which education may be organised, including use of the private sector, but stressed that the State must guarantee the right of education for all. Education must be considered a public service even though it may be provided by the private sector. Furthermore, universal full-time education required an effective ban on child labour. All education programmes financed by the Community must have far-reaching strategies which include social mobilisation and bridging courses for older children.