Structural Funds. 10th annual report, 1998

1999/2211(COS) - 15/06/2000 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Maurizio TURCO (TDI, Italy) on the Commission's 10th Annual Report on the structural funds. Parliament declared itself satisfied with the Structural Fund implementation rates in 1998, but noted that efforts were still required, especially in the area of Community Initiatives, to commit all resources by the end of the programming period. It called on the Commission and the Member States to take the necessary steps to avoid a sluggish flow of resources in the initial stages of Structural Fund implementation and thus to ensure that, in the 2000-2006 period, the programme is implemented evenly in each individual year. The report does not contain any indication regarding the average duration of the procedure for the consideration of funding applications by the Commission. Parliament considered it unacceptable that in certain cases relating in particular to the Community Initiatives, the consideration of such applications has taken over a year. On coordination with other Community policies, Parliament believes that there must be a clear link between ESF and other structural fund measures and NAPs in the new programming period. Given the importance of territorial pacts, the Commission needs to ensure that the Parliament is fully informed about the state of the pacts, especially for employment purposes, and the use of appropriations by the wide range of operators concerned. With regard to the principle of additionality, the Commission is required to find instruments for improving verification and to assess additionality more comprehensively. The Member States are urged to ensure that the additionality principle is strictly upheld. Parliament must be provided as soon as possible with details of checks on full compliance with the principle and also a list of the punitive measures to be imposed in cases where statutory requirements have not been met. With regard to evaluation and control, Parliament regrets that unsuitable and inadequate evaluators have frequently been employed. The Commission is required to strengthen controls over implementation by means of considerably more on-the spot checks and to lay down objective criteria for assessing their quality. Parliament should be informed of all cases of irregularities, and the Commission should ensure that its annual report ncludes a section on the measures which it has adopted in response to criticisms expressed by Parliament in previous years.