Social cohesion: poverty and social exclusion, joint report on social inclusion

2002/2051(COS) - 11/06/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its resolution based on the report by Ilda FIGUEIREDO (GUE/NGL, Portugal) on social cohesion. (Please refer to the document dated 23/04/02.) Parliament stated that high levels of employment and social protection, an increase in living standards and the quality of life and economic and social cohesion must be a priority for the EU and are fundamental in reducing and preventing poverty and social exclusion. All forms of employment are to be encouraged, including temporary work. Member States should provide accessible and compulsory education for a minimum of 12 years to all children, and strengthen the institution of "second chance" schools, given that many young people who drop out are unemployed. Parliament stressed the importance of modernising the social security systems to enable them to cope with traditional and new risks of poverty and of designing measures, including in the form of social benefits, for single parents to boost their earning capacity. The open method of coordination must embrace greater openness by involving local and regional authorities, labour and management and by ensuring a broad public debate at national level to achieve a genuine exchange of best practice. Parliament should be fully involved in open coordination. Member States, whatever their national political and administrative set-up, must ensure that policies are put into place as close as possible to the individual, and clear lines of responsibility drawn between the different levels of competence. Parliament called for greater attention to the structural changes currently taking place, including the accession of the candidate countries, which could engender new forms of poverty, stemming from industrial restructuring and the switch to social systems characteristic of a competition-driven economy. There needs to be particular focus on the long term unemployed, workers who have retired on a bridging pension, and persons who have no opportunity to enter the labour market. A relevant strategy to combat social exclusion should pay particular attention to women and children. Finally, Parliament felt that particular attention must be paid to all the risk factors identified by the National Action Plans which highlight the multidimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion, which is not restricted to access to the labour market, but also concerns education, health, and participation in decision-making forums.