Economic and social cohesion: regional trends, debate on future developments: 2nd interim report

2003/2095(INI) - 02/09/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its own-initiative report drafted by Emmanouil MASTORAKIS (PES, Greece) on the Commission's report on economic and social cohesion. (Please see the summary of 08/07 /03.) The resolution was adopted by 452 votes favour, 56 against and 23 abstentions. Parliament also stated that the current threshold of 0.45% of Community GDP allocated to the cohesion policy was a threshold beneath which it is not possible to fall without jeopardising the achievement of the objectives laid down in the Union's cohesion policy. An evaluation of the needs of cohesion policy must take place immediately in the context of the financial perspectives with a view to enlargement. Parliament stressed the importance of the Cohesion Fund, particularly for the applicant countries. Those Member States which have a GDP of less than 90% of the EU average and are not members of the euro zone receive a combined grant from the Cohesion Fund and the Structural Funds for use in the environmental sector and for trans-European networks. In addition, there is a need for more clarification of the scope of activities within the various objectives. Parliament called for the measures and funding to be moved from Objective 3 to the new Objective 2. There must be an accurate definition of the relationship between regional policy and the rural development policy implemented within the framework of the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy and the socio-economic aid available from the structural section of the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance. Parliament emphasised the need for clear and unambiguous criteria for the implementation of Objective 2, in order to achieve a balanced distribution of economic resources between the regions in accordance with actual requirements. Finally, Parliament demanded that in the framework of the revision of the Structural Funds regulations, the role of partnership should be strengthened given the unequal progress in applying partnership in the Member States. The Commission should propose a harmonisation of the implementation and selection of partnership in regional policy.