Report on fundamental rights in 2002 in the European Union

2002/2013(INI) - 04/09/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Fodé SYLLA (EUL/NGL, France) on fundamental rights in the EU in 2002. (Please see the summary dated 10/07/03.) On the subject of terrorism, Parliament again stated its support for measures to combat terrorism, but pointed out that the adoption of these measures must fall within the bounds of the rule of law and ensure full respect for human rights and public freedoms. It expressed concern at the consequences of international cooperation with the United States, which applies different and lower standards than the EU as regards both notification of personal data required from airline companies or by Europol and the conditions of detention of Community nationals at the Guantanamo base. On the matter of data protection, the House expressed serious concern at the agreements involving the forwarding of personal data between the EU and third bodies such as Interpol or third States such as USA, which do not offer the same level of data protection. Such agreements must at all events maintain the level of data protection guaranteed by Directive 95/46/EC. These agreements should systematically make provision for the establishment of a supervisory body responsible for monitoring full compliance with the guarantees when the agreements are implemented. Particular concern was shown at the requirement imposed by the US authorities on airlines to provide access to the personal data they hold concerning passengers on transatlantic flights. Turning to asylum, Members felt that some progress was made in 2002 towards a harmonised common asylum and immigration policy. It regretted that the common policy agreed between the Member States is based on minimum standards which have been set too low and that the emphasis in asylum and immigration policy is on repressive and negative measures. The detention of asylum-seekers should be restricted solely to exceptional cases which comply with the grounds laid down in the UNHCR guidelines on the criteria and standards applicable to the detention of asylum-seekers. Parliament was concerned by the high number of persons who lost their lives in 2002 whilst seeking refuge in the European Union. This dramatic situation called for the implementation of a balanced policy providing for legal immigration channels. On combating racism and xenophobia, there is at the increase in anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic manifestations of hatred and discrimination following the 11 September 2001 attacks. Parliament welcomed the awareness-raising campaigns conducted by several governments (UK, Sweden, Germany, Finland, Portugal), forewarning the public against the dangers of stereotyping and the Manichaean view of a clash of 'civilisations'. Finally, with regard to discrimination, Parliament noted that in Europe four main social groups are subjected to discrimination (foreigners, temporary workers, persons with disabilities and women). It urged the Member States and the institutions to take the necessary action to put an end to such discrimination. Methods suggested include ensuring respect for maximum working hours, guaranteeing genuine occupational safety (5 000 fatal accidents in the EU in 2002), safeguarding against harassment at work (9% of EU workers) and setting a fair minimum wage (Ireland, Spain and Greece, where the minimum wage is less than 50% of theaverage net wage).