Employment and social issues in the applicant countries

2000/2121(INI) - 04/10/2000

The European Parliament, having regard to the contributions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, welcomes and acknowledges the tremendous efforts which the CEECs have made to modernise their economic and social structures. However, it points out with concern that the growth rates in the CEECs are not up to the expectations of the economic research institutions as forecast in 1997 and that internal social disparities are increasing, which means that the convergence of income is likely to progress significantly more slowly. Therefore, the Parliament calls on the economic and social policy measures to be taken, starting during the pre-accession period, in order to enhance social and economic cohesion and to avoid negative impacts resulting from considerable differences in income within within even Member States. Furthermore, the Parliament considers it necessary in view of accession that companies based in the EU comply with its social and environmental standards when operating in/or ivesting in the candidate countries. It also asks the Commission to negotiate a "code of conduct", following the example of the code of conduct on social and ecological aspects for multinationals adopted by the OECD. With regard to social dialogue, greater efforts should be made to develop this in order to contribute to democratic development, the development of social security systems, health and pension systems and health and safety at work, as well as to guarantee equal opportunities and equal treatment and non-discrimination by labour market policy. Moreover, the Commission is called upon, as a matter of urgency, to fund the planned, specific cross-border support measures in the border regions in the EU confronted with commuters due to the divergent standards of living. Finally, the Parliament asks the Commission for a detailed study of the causes of reasons for under-five mortality (especially in Romania), demographic shrink and lower life expectation (especially in Romania, Hungary and the Baltic States), the situation of disabled people in the institutions and the general treatment of the Roman people.