Social inclusion in the new Member States

2004/2210(INI) - 20/04/2005

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Csaba ORY(EPP-ED, HU) on social inclusion in the new Member States. The report said that social inclusion should be treated "as a social problem falling under the Lisbon Strategy". It called on the new Member States inter alia to revise their economic policies with the aim of promoting the creation of permanent, high-quality jobs.

MEPs pointed to the need to improve the social situation of, amongst others, women, older, sick or disabled persons, unprotected children, minorities, immigrants, the homeless and victims of dependency. To this end, the new Member States should ensure that measures for educational, professional training and employment promotion programmes meeting the needs of different vulnerable groups are in place. There must be sufficient funds to ensure access to lifelong learning for all and proactive policies should be developed to ensure the inclusion of immigrants and children at risk of poverty. MEPs also warned the governments of the new Member States to avoid a situation where the adoption of the euro will plunge certain social groups, particularly those living on small pensions or social welfare payments, into poverty.

The committee recognised the key role of the social partners and called for the creation of favourable legal and financial conditions enabling civil, professional and social organisations to participate actively in combating poverty. The new Member States were asked to draw up a long-term strategy and give financial assistance to improve the situation of local authorities which face difficulties in performing their duties related to social inclusion. Greater efforts than at present should also be made to support construction projects which increase the availability of more affordable housing.

Finally, appropriate legislation in the area of social services in the new Member States should be developed through the targeted use of the European Social Fund and other structural funds.