Support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) 2007-2013

2004/0161(CNS) - 07/06/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution by 559 votes, with 26 against and 61 abstentions, and made several amendments to the Commission's proposals. The report was drafted by Agnes SCHIERHUBER (EPP-ED, AT). The thrust of the Parliament's report was that there should be no budget cuts at the expense of rural areas. It stated that the policy for the rural areas cannot and must not replace other already existing policies such as structural and cohesion funds.

The main amendments regard the minimum spending rates to be earmarked for the three different axes of rural development. To recall, the Commission wanted the Member States to agree to earmark 15% of rural development funds towards axis 1 on improving competitiveness, 25% towards axis 2 on environment and land management, and 15% towards diversification measures. Parliament, however, required minimum spending rates lower than those advocated by the Commission. The resolution calls for:

-10% of the Rural Development Fund's to be earmarked for axis 1 on competitiveness;

-20% of the total contribution to go to axis 2 on environment and land management;

-8% of the total contribution to be set aside for axis 3 on the diversification of the rural economy.

Parliament also called for the deletion of the LEADER reserve.

It put some emphasis on gender mainstreaming in the text, stating that Member States shall devise measures to facilitate access by women to joint ownership of farms and to the aid provided for in the Regulation. Specific aid to small and micro-enterprises was also discussed.

Other amendments include:

- the first summary report by Member States will be in 2010, and after the conclusion of the programming period, each Member State shall submit a summary report on the programming period 20072013;

- the amounts required to pay compensation for nature conservation measures under NATURA 2000 shall be added to the rural development budget.

Finally, the European Parliament also wants the second axis on "land management" to be renamed "Improving the environment and the countryside", and called for installation aid for young farmers to be increased to EUR 55,000 in the form of a single premium or an interest subsidy on loans.