Social inclusion in the new Member States

2004/2210(INI) - 09/06/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Csaba ORY (EPP-ED, HU) on social inclusion. (Please see the document of 20/04/2005.) Parliament cited high levels of unemployment due to non-existent labour force mobility and to a lack of education and training as key obstacles in the fight against social inclusion in the new member states. Parliament called on the new EU members for Central and East Europe to review their economic policies with the aim of promoting the creation of permanent, high-quality jobs.

Parliament went on to state that very little use has been made in the new Member States of financial incentives which indirectly promote job creation. Employment levels 8% are lower in the new member states than the old ones. With national governments often handing over ever more responsibilities to local authorities, efforts must be concentrated at regional and local level in particular, with job creation via SMEs particularly desirable. Local governments in the new Member States are, however, plagued by an acute shortage of resources and most Member States lack any strategy for solving this problem. Communication flows must be increased between new member states to foster an exchange of experience and best practice.

Parliament called on the new Member States to do the following:

- pay greater attention to legislation in the area of social services, with particular regard to intervention, and encourage the inclusion of groups in the social economy, the development of which should be supported through the targeted use of the European Social Fund and other structural funds;

- extend educational measures, tackle illiteracy (including, equally, functional illiteracy and actual illiteracy), with special reference to the requirements of all minorities, especially, in some countries, the Roma, and eliminate segregated education and in particular to take account of educational needs in rural areas;

- increase the range of services provided for families, in order to improve the situation of breadwinners with children or elderly family members in need of care;

- develop proactive policies to ensure the inclusion of immigrants;

- make greater efforts than at present to solve the housing problem, by increasing the supply of more affordable housing and,in particular, by supporting the construction projects of local authorities;

- include in their social inclusion policy the issue of homelessness, as an extreme form of social exclusion, since it affects thousands of people, particularly women, in each country;

- promote more effectively than at present the social inclusion of minorities and improvements in the conditions for the education of the Roma;

- promote the social integration of persons with disabilities more effectively than hitherto;

- make sufficient funds available to ensure access to quality systems of lifelong learning for all;

- revise their economic policies in the light of the conclusions of the European Union in its mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy.

- statistical data from the new Member States is scarce, and the latter should collect and publish updated and comparable data broken down by gender.

Finally, Parliament urged the Commission to review all legal provisions to combat discrimination, based on Article 13 of the EC Treaty, and bring appropriate proceedings against all Member States which do not transpose or apply the relevant directives in the required way or within the required time limit.