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Portability of supplementary pension rights

Plenary speech by MEP Jean Lambert

Jean Lambert, *on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group***.** Madam President, I would also like to thank the rapporteur for her work. Getting us to this vote has not been easy, as we have heard, because we have been forced to respond to changing and sometimes intransigent positions from the Council.

My group will support a number of the committee amendments, notably those that change the scope from workers to persons, which will certainly help cover certain particular cases. We expect this directive to cover all who have contributed to these second-pillar schemes through their work, and to be non-discriminatory in application. We shall not, therefore, be supporting Amendment 34 or the amendments from one other political group.

We have heard that mobility is seen as increasingly important. Indeed, it is a fact of life. Flexicurity is a buzzword in our discussions, and mobile workers need a background of security, of which pension provision is a part. They need to be able to spread their pension risk, but individual pensions have their problems, as our debate on Equitable Life this week has shown. It should be a warning to all Member States tending to rely only on state and private pensions, without a work-based pillar. As we know, there is no requirement to introduce such schemes in this proposal, so those Member States should not put barriers in the way of others.

People should be able to benefit from the accrual of pension payments and not see their contributions left in various schemes like drying slices of salami, hence Amendment 48 to reintroduce portability, the core of this proposal. We know that there is no majority support, but we want to put down a marker to let the Council know that it really has to get to grips with this issue, because it is an increasing necessity. Its current approach seems, to many of us, to be a delaying tactic and, at times, a betrayal of their own calls for greater mobility.

We need rules to protect the dormant rights of scheme members, so we cannot support Amendment 38, which we see as a wrecking amendment not in the interests of citizens. We will support the committee position on this point. However, we have problems with the age-related provisions in Article 4 and the lengthy vesting periods in the committee amendments. We find them discriminatory and, in spite of what the Commission has told us, we believe that increased mobility for the over-25s will be a continuation of what is happening now. Amendment 47 is therefore based on the legal age at which Member States allow people to work full time, which is 15 in at least one case. We cannot support going beyond the Commission proposal.

We also want to see early implementation, hence Amendment 49. However, the Council has to take on its responsibility and deliver a proposal which reflects its rhetoric and improves the situation of those changing employment within the European Union.

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