Election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage: reform

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The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted the report by Danuta Maria HÜBNER (EPP, PL) and Jo LEINEN (S&D, DE) on the draft Council decision amending the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, annexed to Council Decision 76/787 /ECSC, EEC, Euratom of 20 September 1976.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament give its consent to the draft Council decision.

In the explanatory memorandum accompanying the draft legislative resolution, Members recalled that in November 2015, Parliament adopted a proposal for the reform of EU electoral law that aimed to encourage citizens' participation, to reinforce the European dimension of elections, to make Parliament's own functioning more efficient, and to improve the conduct of elections.

The draft Council decision - which represents the maximum that could be achieved in the current political context and in view of the constraints of the procedure - contains several positive elements that will significantly improve the character and conduct of the European elections in the future:

- full respect for the constitutional and electoral traditions of the Member States;
- new rules to make European citizens more aware of the link between national parties and candidates and their affiliation to a European political party;
- the possibility of voting more easily in European elections, through the introduction of electronic and postal voting, which should result in a higher electoral turnout;
- the right to vote granted to citizens of the Union residing in third countries;
- the establishment of a minimum deadline for the establishment of electoral lists;
- measures against double voting;
- the designation of a contact authority to exchange data on voters and candidates;
- a mandatory minimum threshold for the allocation of seats, between 2 and 5 %, for constituencies with more than 35 seats for EP elections, which will make the electoral conditions more equal for political parties in all Member States.