European voluntary service for young people: Community action programme 1998-2002

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The rapporteur highlighted the originality of the programme whose main aim was to give young people the opportunity to become voluntarily involved in social, cultural and environmental projects. She welcomed the fact that, at the end of the pilot phase, many young people had returned to their studies, found a job or decided to stay on in their host country. She also stressed the need to offer linguistic and cultural preparation to young people who agreed to go abroad. Mrs Fontaine also called for the financial resources to match the programme's quality objective. By proposing ECU 80 million for 1998-1999, Parliament wanted to triple the number of young people who could benefit from the programme. Commissioner Cresson indicated that the Commission shared Parliament's view on the Council's common position. She confirmed that, in qualitative terms, the programme's results were excellent, despite the obstacles which remained to the mobility of young volunteers, particularly young unemployed people. Mrs Cresson rejected Amendments Nos 1 (but proposed an amendment to its wording) and 5 which provided for the introduction of a European status of young volunteer without taking into account the responsibilities of the Member States. The Commission could also not accept part of Amendments Nos 2 and 4 on the link with national civilian services. Amendments Nos 7, 8, 9 and 10 also had to be rejected for strictly legal reasons. However, the Commission could accept the amendment on the composition of the programme committee as this complied with the decision on comitology. Finally, while being very sympathetic to Amendment No 3 (on the two-year budget for the programme), the Commission still maintained its original proposal for a budget of ECU 60 million given that this represented the minimum amount required to achieve the programme's objectives in light of the experience of the pilot phase.