Reforming the Commission: action plan, aspects concerning the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. White Paper

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The committee adopted the report by Alain LAMASSOURE (EPP-ED, F) on the aspects of the White Paper falling within its remit. It welcomed the reforms that had already been implemented by the Commission, such as the new structure of directorates-general and new presidential powers for the dismissal of Commissioners, and urged that the principle of an independent and impartial European civil service be maintained. It praised a number of the measures proposed by the Commission, such as improved coordination of budgetary and legislative priorities and needs, greater transparency, the drawing up of the new codes of conduct and improved relations with the social partners. It regretted, however, that the first stage of the reform had not been preceded by any in-depth consideration of the problems of European governance, which was to be the subject of a White Paper in 2001 and would lead to further reforms. In this context, the committee wanted the Commission to devise an internal procedure to ensure that the subsidarity principle was taken into account before any proposal for new regulatory measures was drawn up and to ensure that it did as little management as possible in order to concentrate on initiation, coordination and control. The Member States, for their part, should assist the Commission in decentralising the management of EU policies. The committee stressed that the Commission should be given the main role in preparations for and follow-up to meetings of the European Council and the Council of Ministers. It should also be fully associated in the work of the Coordination Committee on police and judicial cooperation. The Commission should be the "think-tank and institutional memory" of the EU, and its policy analysis and planning functions should be enhanced. The committee also called on the Commission to conduct an overall study into the problem of the EU's external representation and to promote the establishment of a common diplomatic service which would be subordinate to it. Lastly, it felt that the office of the High Representative of the CFSP should be incorporated into the Commission in the long run to avoid the problem of too many different - and competing - European authorities.