Statute and financing of European political parties

2001/0011(COD) - 03/05/2001

The committee adopted the report by Ursula SCHLEICHER (EPP/ED, D) broadly approving the proposal under the consultation procedure, subject to a number of amendments designed primarily to improve scrutiny over, and the transparency of, the finances of European political parties. It specified that any union of European political parties must be a "long-term" union, to prevent alliances being created solely for the purpose of attracting Community funds. It also amended the conditions relating to the seats won by European political parties enabling them to qualify for Community funding. Whereas the proposal said that such parties would be eligible for funding if they won seats in the European Parliament or in national or regional parliaments in at least five Member States or if they won at least 5% of votes in five different Member States, the committee proposed, with a view to enlargement, that they should be eligible for funding if they won such seats, or if they won at least 5% of votes, in one third of Member States. The committee also stipulated that European parties should be required to make public any donations they received (anonymous donations being banned) and allow their accounts to be audited externally. Parties which received funds not allowed under the rules would have to reimburse them and Parliament's Bureau would even be able to impose financial penalties. The Court of Justice should be able to suspend funding for any party which did not respect democracy and fundamental rights. Other amendments sought to ensure that European parties also observed the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and sought to recognise the legal personality of European parties. A further amendment concerned the role of the European Parliament in verifying the conditions for the constitution of a European party, the Commission having proposed that an "independent committee of eminent persons" be appointed to decide on any disputes. The report said it should be Parliament's Bureau that decided on such disputes.