The legal personality of the European Union

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Carlos CARNERO GONZÁLEZ (PES, E) on the legal personality of the European Union. The report reiterated Parliament's often-repeated call for a comprehensive reform of the treaties leading to a clearer and more readily understandable Union structure. The present complex situation was the product of successive layers resulting in the coexistence of the Union, without legal personality, and the Communities, with functions being split between the different entities. The committee pointed out that public opinion nevertheless perceived the complex organisation of the Union as an autonomous and unitary system, even though in formal terms it still lacked legal personality. This issue should therefore be addressed within the context of the Convention set up to prepare for the next Intergovernmental Conference on the future of the EU. The report said that a simple, transparent and comprehensible structure should be established by combining the existing Communities and pillars into a single Union, which alone would have legal personality, accompanied by a unification of the treaties into a coherent Treaty on European Union. This would improve the Union's image and was an essential step towards increasing the coherence, visibility and efficiency of its external action. It would also help remedy the dysfunctions caused by the pillar structure and make it easier for citizens to identify with the Union. Furthermore, it would be a key element in establishing a system for the protection of fundamental rights at Union level. The committee also argued that the attainment of political union implied giving the EU legal personality and that the process of constitutionalisation must, therefore, lead to a definition of this legal personality.