Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union: respect for and promotion of the values on which the Union is based

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Johannes VOGGENHUBER (Greens/EFA, A) in response to the Commission communication on Article 7 of the EU Treaty (respect for and promotion of the values on which the Union is based). MEPs disagreed with the Commission's view that "in this Union of values it will not be necessary to apply penalties pursuant to Article 7 of the Union Treaty". Instead, they said, ignoring the possible need for penalties must create the impression that the Union is not prepared or in a position to use all the means at its disposal to defend its values. They also took the view that the lack of a right of initiative for Parliament in the procedure laid down to deal with serious breaches should in no way prevent Parliament from using its supervisory powers - in line with its normal role - to make a political call for action by the Council. MEPs believed that the following principles should underpin the application of Article 7 of the EU Treaty: - confidence in the democratic and constitutional order of all Member States and in the authority of the European Court of Justice and of the European Court of Human Rights; - plurality: no improper use must be made of the procedures under Article 7 as instruments of political opposition; - equality of treatment of all Member States; - oppenness: procedures must be transparent, understandable and open to the public. Lastly, the committee said that it was advisable, once the new Parliament and new Commission had taken office, to embark on an interinstitutional dialogue on a set of common criteria and the above-mentioned principles governing the opening of the Article 7 procedure.