

Information society: multiannual programme to promote the linguistic diversity of Europe (MLIS)

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The Committee unanimously adopted the report by Ms. Nana MOUSKOURI on the Commission proposal for a programme to promote the linguistic diversity of the EU in the information society. While approving the general objectives of the proposed programme, the Committee adopted more than 60 amendments to the text. Following a recommendation by the rapporteur, the Committee adopted an amendment changing the legal basis for the proposal. The Commission bases it on Article 130 (Industry) of the EC Treaty, but the Committee decided that a dual legal basis, also involving Article 128 (Culture), would be more appropriate. In her report, Ms. MOUSKOURI points out that the proposed allocation of the budget clearly shows that the cultural aspects take priority over the industrial aspects. This change of legal basis means as a result that the proposal no longer falls under the simple consultation procedure, but instead under the codecision procedure. The Committee also called for the budget of the programme to be increased from ECU 15 m to ECU 20 m. To further strengthen the protection of the linguistic heritage, the Committee adopted an amendment suggesting that the Member States could use the Structural Funds to this end. To combat the americanization of European languages, the Committee adopted an amendment by Ms Mair MORGAN (PSE, UK) which states that European standards for spelling must be used. Other adopted amendments include changes to the Comitology system in order to bring it into line with Parliament's views, several new recitals stressing the cultural dimension of the programme, etc. Mr Jan ROUKENS, Commission representative, told the Committee that most of the adopted amendments seemed to be in line with what the Commission wants to achieve with the programme. Regarding the use of the Structural Funds in this context, he said that the Commission had no objections to this. However, he reminded the Committee that the allocation of the Structural Funds was the responsibility of the Member States. As regards the change of legal basis, the Commission doubted whether it was possible to join two articles which use different legislative procedures. Obviously, there will be further discussions on this matter in the Commission and in the Council, concluded Mr Roukens. The Chair, Ms. Banotti, ended the debate by saying that there must be further discussions on the legal basis. Otherwise, she continued, it may be a situation where "we will see you in court".