European voluntary service for young people: Community action programme 1998-2002

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Although the Council, in its common position, accepted a number of important amendments made by Parliament, the Committee has shown, in adopting the report by Nicole FONTAINE (EPP, F), that it plans to keep up the pressure on four points it regards as crucial: the budget, the social security status of volunteers, complementarity between national civilian service and European voluntary service and Parliament's right to monitor the programme. The report was adopted at second reading under the codecision procedure. On the budget, Parliament is standing by its request for Ecu 80m for the period 1998-99. In the rapporteur's view, this amount is essential to cover the cultural and linguistic preparation of volunteers and to make individual mobility sufficiently attractive. On the social security status of volunteers, the Member States should, the committee believes, remove obstacles which might otherwise hinder the operation of the programme. This would mean granting residence rights, maintaining entitlements (especially social security entitlements) and granting tax exemptions for payments and allowances received by volunteers for travel, accommodation and subsistence. In addition, the report calls on the Commission to bring forward proposals for a European statute for young volunteers. On the question of complementarity with national civilian services, Member States are asked to facilitate access for young volunteers to national infrastructures. Lastly, the report calls for Parliament to be allowed to monitor progress throughout the life of the programme and when it comes to be assessed.