Cultural cooperation in European Union

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The committee adopted an own-initiative report by Giorgio RUFFOLO (PES, I) on culture in Europe, calling for cultural cooperation to be stepped up with the aim of creating a "European cultural area". The committee urged the Member States to set a common objective of allocating at least 1% of total public funds to "stimulating artistic creation, expression and dissemination". As on previous occasions it voiced dissatisfaction at the unanimity requirement for voting in Council on cultural matters (Article 151 of the Treaty). The report called on the Commission to draw up and carry out, with an active contribution from the Member States, a three-year cultural cooperation plan incorporating targets such as establishing telematics networks and services to connect cultural institutions and exchanges of best practice in the area of twinning. MEPs also wanted a European agency to be set up to monitor cultural cooperation. This body should be linked to the Commission and the national contact points in the Culture 2000 Programme. The committee called for the role of the contact points to be upgraded when the Culture 2000 Programme was reviewed. For the purposes of this review, a second Cultural Forum should be held to redefine the values, objectives and forms of cultural cooperation in Europe. Given the importance of sponsorship for artistic creation and cultural events, the committee wanted Member States to allow tax benefits to patrons of the arts. In addition, it said the Commission should examine the possibility of aligning more closely at Community level the principles governing the tax treatment of works of art and artistic work, particularly as regards VAT.