Implementation of Youth programme

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Lissy GRÖNER (PES, D) on the implementation of the 'YOUTH' programme. It was critical of the Commission's failure to provide clear figures for the implementation of the programme in 2000, with the result that it was impossible to track exactly how funds were disbursed. This needed to be remedied in future, and the Commission was also urged to draw up an annual report on the implementation of the programme, in conjunction with the national agencies. The committee stressed the need for the programme countries and the Commission itself to ensure prompt payment to the national agencies' funds. It also issued a reminder to the Member States that the programme was intended to support and supplement national projects and should not be used as a pretext for reducing the funds they allocated to youth exchange programmes. The report expressed concern about the administrative bottlenecks created by the decentralised management of the programme. The Commission should also simplify and streamline its own internal procedures for the approval of projects, with a view to reducing the four- to five-month period currently required to a maximum of three months. There was support for the Commission's move to fund projects primarily by means of flat-rate amounts, which should help inter alia to reduce the hitherto high administrative costs of the programme. The committee also expressed concern that disadvantaged young people were not participating in the programme in sufficient numbers and called on the Commission to look into the reasons for this. The Commission was also urged to promote projects to help integrate young immigrants in Europe. Other points taken up in the report included the need to ensure that the ratio of male to female participation was approximately equal and that participants in the 'Youth' programme were able to obtain visas free of charge and without excessive red tape.