Implementation of CULTURE 2000 programme

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Vasco GRAÇA MOURA (EPP-ED, P) on the implementation of the 'Culture 2000' programme. It was critical of the "chaotic management" and administrative delays that had characterised the first two years of the programme, as well as the constantly shifting criteria which had engendered confusion and uncertainty. The programme needed to focus clearly on its objectives over the next few years and ensure continuity and consistency for EU activities in this field. There was also a need to assess the extent to which the activities actually fulfilled the objectives pursued. The committee also called for greater administrative flexibility and for a more rigorous assessment of the basic selection criteria for projects. It was important to ensure that the content of projects provided a genuine European added value. MEPs stressed that there was a mismatch between the programme's ambitious objectives and the funding available, and called for the forthcoming review of the programme to ensure that it received adequate funds. They reaffirmed the political relevance of those objectives, in particular the explicit recognition of culture as an economic factor and as a factor in social integration and citizenship, the highlighting of cultural and linguistic diversity and the development of new forms of cultural expression and the promotion of cultural dialogue and mutual knowledge of the culture and history of European peoples. It was also important, for the purposes of cultural dialogue and of preventing any clash of cultures, for the Mediterranean countries to be involved in the programme. The committee also wanted to see greater coordination between Culture 2000 and the structural funds intended to finance cultural objectives. It felt, moreover, that the implementation of projects, particularly those involving the applicant countries, was hampered by the 5% contribution level. This was effectively directing awards towards applicants with greater financial resources, which was contrary to the spirit of the programme. The Commission was urged to bear in mind, when managing and evaluating Culture 2000, that it was essentially a programme directed at citizens. More information should be made available on the selected projects and on the role of the cultural contact points in order to increase public awareness and participation. Finally, the report called on the Commission to draw up a cultural policy blueprint for the cooperation programme which would follow Culture 2000, bearing in mind the challenges of enlargement.