Information, communication: framework for cooperation between institutions and with the Member States

2001/2192(COS) - 19/02/2002

The committee unanimously adopted the report by Ole ANDREASEN (ELDR, DK) on the Commission communication. It welcomed this policy paper as well as the structural changes which had taken place within the Commission itself and the new and fruitful cooperation between Commission and Parliament. MEPs voiced concern at the declining turnout at European elections and said that funding must be earmarked, starting in 2003, for a joint awareness-raising campaign involving Parliament, Commission and Member States in the run-up to the elections in June 2004. The committee added that information campaigns should focus on issues close to the everyday lives of citizens, such as food safety, the euro, employment, the environment and freedom of movement, while not underestimating the importance of major campaigns such as the future of Europe, enlargement and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. MEPs also called for greater decentralisation of all information campaigns and measures and in particular for greater support to be given to existing civic information networks in the Member States (European Union Houses, Info-Points, International Federation of Europe Houses, European Movement, etc). It was essential that information should be factual, readable, impartial and free of propaganda. Given that television was the general public's preferred medium for receiving information on the European Union, the EU institutions should make greater use of it. In particular they should strengthen cooperation with regional TV stations, especially in the candidate countries, and encourage broadcasters to use the facilities of Europe by Satellite. MEPs also wanted to see greater use made of the Internet. They were critical of the amount of budgetary resources used for paper publications and called for all publications in future to be available in electronic format. They also questioned, in the case of Parliament, whether the expenditure on visitors' groups was not disproportionate (accounting as it does for 43% of the general information budget) and called for an analysis of the impact and value of such visits. Other demands included a reorganisation of the various websites of the major EU institutions as well as a shared portal for Commission, Council, Parliament and the other institutions, since this was needed to provide a better overview of the Union's policies and laws. Access to Community databases such as CELEX should be free. The committee called for the setting up within Parliament of an education unit with sufficient resources to act as a centre for European-level exchanges on all matters relating to education for European citizenship. Lastly, it called for videoconferencing equipment to be installed in Parliament to enable MEPs to have easier access to their constituencies.