Economic and monetary union EMU and the euro: strategy of communication and information up to 2002

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The committee adopted the report by Othmar KARAS (EPP/ED, A) on the Commission communication setting out the strategy for the euro information campaign in the run-up to 2002. The report called for the funding earmarked for 2001 to be increased from EUR 35m to EUR 38m given that the campaign needed to be stepped up in the final stages. It pointed out that the campaign should be extended by a further 6 months up to mid-2002 (i.e. after the introduction of euro notes and coins in January 2002) with a budget of EUR 20 m for that period. The committee also wanted greater efforts to be made to explain the practicalities of the new currency for small businesses, which, unlike large enterprises, had not yet started to make the necessary adjustments. It called for the campaign to address women as a specific target group, as polls showed that women still had serious concerns about the introduction of the euro, and to take particular account of the needs of special categories of people such as the blind and the elderly. Children were another important target group and the committee put forward various ideas for raising awareness including essay and painting competitions and giving all children born in 2001 a euro savings book. Other points raised by the report included the need for close coordination of the information campaigns of the EP, the Commission and the Member States with the European Central Bank's campaign and the need for the Commission to take firm action to stop the double charging of customers and bring down the high bank charges for cross-border transactions.