The constitutional status of European political parties

1996/2186(INI) - 29/10/1996

The report by Mr Dimitris TSATSOS on the Constitutional status of European political parties, which was adopted by the Committee on Institutional Affairs, called on the European Union to introduce a framework regulation on the legal status of European political parties together with a regulation on their financial situation. Those organisations which were entitled to the statutory rights of a European political party were political organisations expressing an opinion on European and international political issues (and represented in the European Parliament, or aspiring to such), which were organised in such a way that they could express the political will of the citizens and be more than an election campaign organisation or an organisation in support or parliamentary activities, which were represented in at least 30% of the Member States and engaged in activities outside the national framework. To be able to fulfil their Constitutional role - contributing to the formation of a European conscience and to the expression of the political will of the citizens of the Union - European political parties should have a set of rules and a basic political programme which was accessible to European citizens. Such parties must, in their programme and in their actions, respect the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and their rules must be drawn up in such a way that their political will is forged through democratic principles, whereby citizens of the Union wishing to do so are able to express their political will within the framework of the said party. As regards financing, the Tsatsos report called for grants paid out of the Community budget to be subject to express authorisation by a Community act and for these grants to be allocated on the basis of equal opportunities, while at the same time giving newly constituted parties a fair chance - taking into account the number of Member States in which such parties are represented. These sums could only be granted when parties fulfilled their Constitutional role and their allocation would be dependent on the beneficiaries making their financial situation public. Finally, the Committee on Institutional Affairs called on European political parties, without prejudice to the legal processes within the competence of the European Court of Justice, to use conciliation and arbitration for resolving differences of opinion regarding the application of the law on European political parties.