Citizenship of the Union. 2nd report

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The Committee unanimously adopted a report by its chair, Willy DE CLERCQ (ELDR, B), on the Commission's second report on citizenship of the EU. Mr De Clercq's report stresses the need for a practical approach to EU citizenship. For example, the report's draft resolution calls on Member States to embark without delay on the preparatory work for integrating the Schengen acquis into the EU framework. It goes on to point out that the free movement of EU citizens within the territory of the Union can be guaranteed only by abolishing all controls at internal borders and therefore calls on the Council to adopt directives on this matter which are still pending. It adds that the Commission should submit a legislative proposal eliminating the present inequalities in the right of residence in the Member States and safeguarding proper freedom of movement for Union citizens. The report also urges the Commission to remain vigilant in monitoring the transposition into national law of the 1994 directive on municipal elections and calls on France and Belgium to transpose the directive as soon as possible. It says that the Member States and the Community institutions should decide on the practicalities of providing the European electorate with full information on their rights to vote in and stand as candidates in European elections. The deadline for submitting applications to be entered on the electoral roll for the European elections in June 1999 should not be "unreasonably long" before the date of the election itself. The report notes with regret that the right to consular and diplomatic protection is still at a theoretical stage. It therefore recommends that the Member States should work on a common minimum definition of the protection which Union citizens may expect from any consular or diplomatic representation of a Member State.