Staff Regulations of EC officials: amending the Regulations

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The committee adopted the report by Malcolm HARBOUR (EPP-ED, UK) and Manuel MEDINA ORTEGA (PES, E) endorsing the Commission's proposed reform package for modernising the EU staff regulations. However, MEPs adopted a number of amendments to the proposal under the consultation procedure. They called on the Commission to withdraw its proposal if the Council sought to alter it substantially and also wanted Parliament to await any developments in the negotiations being conducted at the Council before voting on its legislative resolution. Whereas the proposal envisages only two staff categories - administrators (AD) and assistants (AST) - MEPs said that individual institutions with a specific need should be able to create a special category for linguists, known as ADL, to ensure the professionalism of the language service and to bring fresh blood into the institutions. In addition, they said that entry standards for the recruitment of staff should be raised. In particular the committee wanted to maintain educational requirements at a higher level than was being proposed by the Commission. The proposal as presented by the Commission would allow recruitment of candidates who have "equivalent professional experience" rather than insisting on formal educational qualifications. While the committee fully backed the proposals to ban, and lay down clear definitions of, sexual and psychological harassment of staff, it took the view that the burden of proof should be on the accuser in order to discourage malicious accusations. Indeed, it said that wilful or malicious accusations of harassment should possibly result in disciplinary proceedings against the accuser. MEPs also believed the EU institutions should recognise non-marital partnerships, if formally registered or convincingly established. Many other forms of discrimination (including those based on sex, race, religion or belief, political opinion, disability, age or sexual orientation) should also be prohibited. On the thorny issue of pensions (a major concern for the institutions· staff representatives), the committee voted to delete the Commission's proposal for pensions to be weighted according to place of residence. MEPs said all officials should receive the same pension, on grounds of equality since all officials pay the same contributions, and because freedom of establishment would be infringed if pensions varied according to place of residence. Moreover, they argued that the current system was increasingly expensive owing to the bureaucracy required to calculate pensions and check on genuine places of residence.