Economic and political corruption in Europe

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The committee adopted the report by Mrs Heinke SALISCH (PSE, D) by 9 votes to 6. The term corruption was again defined as the behaviour of persons with public or private responsibilities who fail to fulfil their duties because a financial or other advantage has been granted or directly or indirectly offered to them. In fact, this menace, when coupled with organized crime, posed a threat to the functioning of any democratic system which respected the environment and was founded on a market economy, thus destroying public confidence in the integrity of the democratic constitutional state. The CIVI certainly supported the measures already taken by the Council in this respect, especially in order to protect the financial interests of the Community, the initiative for which, the rapporteur reiterated, came from the European Parliament. However, the CIVI wished to go even further and hoped that: * Member States would make bribery and the acceptance of bribes criminal offences; * persons who had been involved in acts of corruption would be encouraged to cooperate with the police and the courts; * the Council would adopt a common position establishing guidelines to enable the Commission to draw up rules for harmonizing provisions and judicial procedures applicable in the Member States for offences of corruption; * the Commission would make every effort to combat corruption within the framework of its powers in the internal market (distortions of competition due to tax relief on bribes etc.); * the Commission would submit a programme of preventive anti-corruption measures by July 1996; * the Court of Auditors would be able to play a role in coordinating action by the various national audit offices with regard to offences of corruption. Its remit should be extended to include activities under the second and third pillars. As far as sanctions were concerned, Mrs SALISCH hoped that economic operators convicted of and sentenced for corruption would be disqualified from competing for public contracts for a given period of time. In addition, Member States were called on to punish acts of corruption by members of parliament and election candidates. A step would be made in this direction when the statute on the members of the European Parliament was adopted.