Judicial cooperation in Europe

1997/2045(INI) - 05/02/1998

The report by Rinaldo BONTEMPI (PES, I) on judicial cooperation in criminal matters in the EU was adopted by the Committee. The report stresses the vital importance of improving judicial cooperation in order to combat organised crime. The committee argues that the instruments available to the judicial authorities must be better geared to dealing with the complexities of contemporary crime. This applies particularly to the criminal procedures used, where the urgent need is to achieve greater speed and efficiency with the help of the latest technology. The report asks national governments and parliaments to try to ensure that the ratification of conventions on judicial cooperation within the EU is speeded up. Mr Bontempi also endorses the requests and proposals contained in the "Geneva Appeal" (drawn up by a number of European magistrates). He believes that agreements should be signed between European states to provide for direct communication between magistrates responsible for an investigation and speedier compliance with letters rogatory and requests for evidence to be forwarded in criminal proceedings. As regards the approximation of laws and the protection of the EU's financial interests, the committee calls for provision to be made for joint indictments for some of the most serious crimes. It also supports effective measures to combat laundering of the proceeds of any kind of crime, maintains that the term 'corruption' should involve any act of abuse committed by a person holding public office, regardless of nationality, and says that all serious tax violations should constitute a crime provided that the term "violations" is harmonised. Lastly, the report calls on the Commission and Council to organise during the current year a joint conference with the European Parliament, in which national parliaments may also take part, on judicial cooperation and strategies to improve the effectiveness of legal and judicial systems.