Crossing at external borders of the States, Schengen cooperation. Annual reports 1998

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The committee adopted the report by Carlos COELHO (EPP-ED, P) on crossing external borders and the development of Schengen cooperation. The report was critical of the lack of transparency surrounding police cooperation and other activities in the field of freedom, security and justice. Parliament had not been kept informed of developments, such as the extension of the Schengen Convention to the countries of the Nordic Passport Union, and was not given access to documents classified as confidential under Schengen rules. The committee therefore called for those rules to be replaced with rules on public access to documents adopted under Article 255 of the EC Treaty and for Parliament to be fully informed of documents excluded from public access. Invoking the relevant articles under the Treaty, the report called for Parliament to be provided with regular reports on the development of cooperation under the third pillar and for decisions and Conventions to be submitted to Parliament for its opinion in sufficient time. It also wanted formal guarantees that the Council's future actions would be in accordance with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. The committee urged the United Kingdom and Ireland to participate fully in the Schengen "acquis" and hence to abolish border controls. In the context of integrating Article 2(2) of the Schengen Convention into Community legislation, the Commission was asked to draw up rules on the prior consultation of the Council, approval of temporary border controls for a limited duration only, a review of the proportionality of such controls and conditions for the extension of the duration. The report also insisted on the need for a separate budget for the operation of the single supervisory body in order to guarantee its independence. Lastly, the committee called for the Schengen Information System to be managed under the EU framework by a separate agency financed from the EU budget and for the establishment of a Community Information System consisting of a single computer network (albeit with functional separation) for the data received under the Schengen, Europol and Customs Use conventions.