Judicial cooperation: creation of a provisional Unit. Initiative Portugal, France, Sweden and Belgium

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The committee adopted the report by Evelyne GEBHARDT (PES, D) amending the proposal under the consultation procedure. Whilst fully supporting the initiative, the committee felt that a number of points should be clarified. It felt, for example, that to achieve a qualitative improvement in the area of judicial cooperation, cooperation between the relevant authorities should not just be coordinated but also strengthened. It also wanted the Commission to be closely involved, because in the end the objective must be a common European legal area, as the European Council agreed in Tampere, which was only possible through the development of common laws and procedures. The committee accepted the proposal that Eurojust be established in two stages, on condition that active use was made of the provisional unit·s experience in order to make adaptations if necessary. The report pointed out that the purpose of the unit was to facilitate judicial, not police, cooperation. The only police officers involved, therefore, should be from Member States which did not have a separate public prosecution service and in which that role was performed by the police. The committee also stressed that new EU structures, such as the provisional unit, must guarantee the protection of personal data, the protection of human rights and the right to be defended - all principles which were enshrined in the legislation of the Member States. It wanted to include Article 29 of the TEU in the legal base as that article reflected the purpose of Eurojust, namely, "to provide citizens with a high level of safety within an area of freedom, security and justice". Lastly, the committee wanted to include a reference to the fact that Eurojust was supposed to be established before the end of 2001.