# Policy against corruption: instruments and recommendations

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Francesco RUTELLI (ELDR, I) in response to a Commission paper on EU policy to fight corruption. Stressing that the entry into force of the European arrest warrant on 1 January 2004 highlighted the need for an EU definition of corruption, the committee made a series of recommendations for tackling the problem in general. MEPs urged the EU Member States and the accession countries to sign and swiftly ratify the recently-negotiated UN Convention against corruption. They also wanted the Member States to ratify all outstanding international conventions in this field without further delay, and encouraged the Commission to adopt a policy of 'naming and shaming' of those Member States which had not lived up to their undertakings to ratify. In addition, the Commission was urged to fill any gaps not covered by existing international conventions and bring forward proposals designed to achieve a measure of legal coordination at EU level as a sign of the Union's determination to introduce and enforce an anti-corruption culture at all levels of political, public and private life. The committee also emphasised that the accession countries and Member States should make equivalent efforts in the fight against corruption and should establish specialist anti-corruption bodies. It said that Eurojust and Europol should be the appropriate bodies for ensuring judicial and police cooperation between national authorities and should be strengthened. MEPs also hoped that the office of the independent European Public Prosecutor would be set up as soon as possible with powers to investigate and prosecute crimes. The report stressed that media pluralism and freedom of information were essential factors in the fight against corruption. The Commission was urged to ensure that these principles were fully respected by the Member States and to submit a directive on the protection of media pluralism. MEPs also called on the Commission to draw up rules for ensuring transparency in political party funding and election expenditure. Moreover, they wanted to see greater transparency in politics, with a public register of financial and other interests for all office-holders at EU, national, regional and local level. Member States were asked to intensify their anti-corruption policies by adopting stringent measures to punish the falsification of accounts, tax evasion and money laundering. Lastly, the report said that successful prosecutions against corruption should be more widely publicised as a dissuasive measure and as a means of raising public awareness.