Justice and home affairs: consequences of enlargement

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In adopting the report by Mr Bernd POSSELT (EPP, D) on the implications of enlargement for cooperation in the field of justice and home affairs, Parliament called on the Commission to place particular emphasis, in the ten applicant countries, on promoting and reinforcing fundamental freedoms and human rights, progress concerning the implementation of the convention on the rights of the child, the rights of minorities, the consolidation of the rule of law, the elimination of all forms of discrimination, the permanent abolition of the death penalty and the wholesale adoption of the acquis communautaire in the field of justice and home affairs. It called in particular for the police and judicial cooperation provided for under Title VI of the Amsterdam Treaty to be extended as far as possible to the applicant countries in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in the following areas: - cooperation between police, customs and prosecuting authorities on the prevention of criminal acts, their detection and investigation, - cooperation and joint initiatives on basic and further training (Robert Schuman, SHERLOCK or ODYSSEUS programmes), - exchange of liaison officers and secondments, - use of items of equipment and forensic research, - joint evaluation of particular investigative techniques for detection of serious forms of organized crime and the establishment of a network for research and documentation on cross-border crime, - gradual approximation of criminal law and joint prosecution of cross-border criminal acts in the areas of organized crime, terrorism, trafficking in people, sexual abuse of children, trafficking in drugs, arms, radioactive material, works of art and valuable cultural items. Parliament called in particular for systematic cooperation between Europol and the competent police authorities in the applicant countries following the entry into force of the Europol Convention. It considered it essential for the provisions relating to the field of justice and home affairs to be revised at the time of the institutional reform which must be carried out before the first enlargement. It also considered that transitional periods (although limited) should be granted to applicant countries in the implementation of the acquis of the third pillar of the Union, in particular with regard to checks at external borders and freedom of movement. It also proposed the establishment of a European Academy for Internal Security to be responsible for training police forces and border control forces of European Union and applicant countries. It also called on the Commission, under the PHARE programme, to provide financial support for the modernization of customs infrastructure in the applicant countries. Lastly, Parliament called on the Council to submit a comprehensive report annually on this cooperation between the European Union and the ten applicant countries and these countries were also called on to make provision for a visa policy before accession to the Union.