Citizenship of the Union. 2nd report

1997/2123(COS) - 02/07/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Willy DE CLERCQ (ELDR, B) on citizenship of the Union, the European Parliament called on the Member States to initiate without delay the preparatory work to integrate the Schengen acquis into the framework of the European Union. It pointed out that the free movement of Union citizens within the territory of the Union could be guaranteed only by abolishing all controls at internal borders, and therefore called on the Commission to submit, as soon as possible, a legislative proposal abolishing inequalities regarding residence in the Member States and properly guaranteeing freedom of movement for citizens of the Union. It called on the Member States to align more closely the educational systems in the various Member States, in order to facilitate the mobility of children. Parliament wished all impediments to the mobility of young people within the European Union to be eliminated by simplifying the recognition of their diplomas or certificates and adopting the directive on safeguarding supplementary pension rights. Infringement proceedings should be brought against all Member States which had not transposed the directives on freedom of movement and right of residence. As regards European and municipal elections, Parliament called on the Member States to ensure that the rights to vote and stand as a candidate were granted without discrimination and could be exercised by all citizens who held the nationality of a Member State and resided in the European Union. It called on Belgium to adopt the national legal provisions transposing Directive 94/80/EC concerning the right to vote in municipal elections as soon as possible. It was necessary to decide on the practicalities of providing the European electorate with full information on their rights to vote in and stand as candidates in European elections. Parliament called on the political parties to accept more Union citizens who were not nationals of the country concerned as party members and candidates on the electoral lists, and to encourage them to take part in political life in their country of residence. No distinction should be made between the exercise of European and local voting rights. It was essential to provide citizens with more information about the role of the Ombudsman and the right to petition the European Parliament. Parliament welcomed the success of the 'Citizens of Europe' initiative and called for it to be expanded. Parliament regretted that the right to consular and diplomatic protection was still at a theoretical stage and recommended that the Member States should work on a common minimum definition of the protection which any Union citizen might expect from any consular or diplomatic representation of a Member State. There was an urgent need for legal protection against violations of data security, personal freedom and integrity as a result of the misuse of printed and electronic mass media. Parliament considered that the involvement of citizens in the process of European integration also required practical measures on the part of the Union in the fields of economic and social affairs, environmental protection and information. In particular, it considered that citizens' European awareness could be enhanced by promoting symbols of membership of the Union, teaching a common minimum syllabus for European history and culture, establishing European voluntary service or introducing a European public holiday to celebrate Europe.