Voluntary organisations and foundations in Europe

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In adopting the report by Mrs GHILARDOTTI (PSE, I) on the role of voluntary organisations and foundations, the European Parliament called for an in-depth analysis of the non-profit-making sector consisting of voluntary organisations and foundations at local, national and European level. This should make it possible to reinvigorate work on Community legislative proposals concerning a statute for a European association and foundation and the multiannual programme for them. It should also help to prepare for the European Year of Voluntary Organisations and Active Citizenship proposed by the Commission. In the context of the proposal for a statute for a European association and foundation, Parliament hoped that a clear distinction would be made between the proposed Statute and the proposal for a Regulation on the European public limited company. In particular, the operating procedures typical of the European plc, a purely economic entity, should not be imposed on the voluntary sector. Parliament stressed the relevance of local action for possible synergies between private business, public-sector and "third sector" initiatives. It welcomed the proposal to make available 1% of the European Social Fund budget for non-governmental organisations, but stressed that this percentage should come in addition to the structural resources already available to the sector. It considered that the new regulations on the Structural Funds should recognise the NGOs as full partners. In the field of employment, it stressed the importance of the non-profit-making sector for job creation and, in the context of the proposal for a multiannual programme of work for this sector, called for part of the resources available to be concentrated on considering the contribution which the sector as a whole could make to carrying out employment policy measures. Measures relating to the sector should also be taken in the context of the efforts being made to implement the employment guidelines adopted at the Luxembourg European Council. It recalled that with the initiative to finance innovative SMEs with high employment levels, part of the financing could be earmarked for SMEs in the third system, especially in sectors such as public health and education. It supported the application of a reduced rate of VAT for certain labour-intensive services provided by the third system. It urged the Commission to enhance the role of the non-profit-making sector in building and consolidating democratic structures in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. It called for a structured sectoral dialogue to be set in motion between the European institutions and the NGOs represented at European level, based on common criteria and procedures. It called on the Commission, finally, to revive the concept of a wide-ranging democratic consultation process in connection with the revision of the Treaties.