Consumers: general framework for Community activities 1999-2003

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In adopting the report by Mr Phillip WHITEHEAD (PSE, UK) on a general framework for Community activities in favour of consumers, the European Parliament called, in particular, for an increase in the budget, from ECU 114 m, as currently proposed by the Commission for 1999-2003, to ECU 130 m. Parliament stressed the importance of taking account of the interests of consumers in all Community policies and greater involvement of consumers in standardisation. It recalled the Community's commitment to impart fresh impetus to its activities for the benefit of consumers, and noted that the confidence of the latter was essential in order to ensure the proper functioning of the internal market (particularly in the wake of the BSE crisis). The new framework proposed is intended to help to: -promote consumers' interests on an international scale, -obtain independent scientific reports of a high standard and develop universally recognised methods of risk assessment, monitoring and inspection, -increase the action capacities of consumer protection organisations with a view to contributing more effectively to the formulation of consumer policy, -contribute to the proper transposition of Community legislation into national law, -protect the legitimate interests of consumers, particularly their right of redress and access to justice. Among the measures proposed by the Commission in its action framework (annexed to the proposal), Parliament stressed the measures relating to: -goods and services which present potential risks and dangers to consumers, -the impact of the euro on goods and services, -the transposition of Community legislation, -promoting consumer awareness of the benefits of the single market (comparative testing, choice and quality of goods, etc.), -consumers' access to the information society, -information on the protection of privacy, -dissemination of information on product safety, -promoting consumer awareness of sustainable and environmentally sound consumption patterns or those which have a social impact, -protecting the legal interests of consumers. As regards Community support, Parliament stipulated that it should be possible for unpaid work or donation in kind to be taken into account up to a level of 20% of total eligible costs. After ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty the Commission should present a new proposal taking account of the new possibilities afforded by the Treaty in this field, altering the budget if necessary.