The role of libraries in modern society

1998/2103(INI) - 23/10/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mrs Mirja Ryynänen (ELDR, FIN) on the role of libraries, Parliament recommends that Member States adopt appropriate measures to enable libraries to play an active role in modern society by providing access to information and knowledge. They should also enable libraries to acquire works even in small or more expensive editions which contribute to cultural and linguistic diversity. As they are by their nature a public service, Parliament calls for basic public library services to be provided free. It calls on the Commission to accelerate work on the Green Paper on the role of libraries in the information society and to take account of the role of libraries when resolving copyright issues. Parliament advocates European cooperation to solve problems relating to the long-term conservation and usability of material and supports the establishment of a European library network. It also calls for the Commission Fifth Framework Research Programme to support the drafting of common standards for libraries for processing, conserving and transferring information and ensuring its compatibility and calls on the Commission to draw up a directive to standardise the manufacture of 'permanent' paper (non acid) to conserve existing book stocks and ensure the preservation of archives, and recommends that books using permanent paper carry an infinity symbol in the consumer's interest. It recommends in particular that Member States provide national funding for digitisation and conservation of documents based on common standards to enable the information to be used beyond national borders. It also recommends that Member States provide their libraries with modern equipment (Internet access) and adequate funding to enable libraries to meet the needs of citizens in the information society, taking into account the costs arising from licence payments for electronic documents, which are becoming increasingly prevalent. It calls for studies on the principles of operation of licensing systems for the use of electronic documents, the costs of such systems and their impact on libraries. It also calls on the Commission and the Member States to negotiate an agreement on provisions to ensure the gathering, conservation and cataloguing of material on a multinational basis both in the respective countries and at European level. It recommends that the Member States make important material produced with the aid of tax revenue accessible to the public and other users and study the possibility of producing on-line versions. Library staff should also be trained in information society developments and the possibility should be studied of setting up European information points in public libraries in other Member States. It calls for a study on the possibility of setting up a European Union focal point for libraries with a remit to coordinate library affairs and research in this area.