Setting-up of specialized European Union bodies for human rights issues

1997/2042(INI) - 19/12/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Marlene LENZ (EPP, D) Parliament called for the setting up of a single coordinating structure within the Commission responsible for human rights and democratization and seeking to improve coordination and dialogue with the European Parliament, the Council and the NGOs. Wishing to be regularly informed about the human rights situation and the actions undertaken by the Union in this field, it pointed out that during the budgetary procedure for 1998 it had decided to set up an interinstitutional consultative working party consisting of representatives of the European Parliament and of the Commission which would be required to deliver an opinion on the annual programme of work on human rights. In the context of this over-arching coordinating structure, Parliament called for consideration of whether it would be desirable to set up a European agency for human rights, modelled on ECHO (EC humanitarian office), under the responsibility of the Commissioner responsible for human rights, with the task of administering the programmes and projects undertaken by the Community in this field and ensuring coordination of the guarantees and sanctions policy. It also repeated its call for a single Commissioner for external relations to be appointed ensuring coordination of all the Directorates-General involved in external relations. Parliament also proposed creating a European network for human rights within the Commission responsible for collecting and organizing relevant information for electronic transmission via the Internet and coordinating the operations carried out by individual Member States. This network would ensure a rapid information exchange on the principles and instruments of human rights policy in the Union, on the human rights situation in the world and the assessment of projects undertaken by the Union. It would come under the Commission's responsibility but the organization of information would be entrusted to a working party comprising representatives of the Commission and Parliament. With regard to organizational and budgetary matters it called for the definition of a common strategy for the utilisation of financial resources allocated to human rights and the regrouping of resources and tasks associated with human rights projects and programmes. In particular it recommended an improvement of cooperation with the NGOs by standardizing partnership contracts which link them to the Community. Lastly it called for greater concentration of the funding allocated to human rights in chapter B7-70 of the Community budget and welcomed the consolidation of appropriations to this end in the 1998 budget.