Economic and political corruption in Europe

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Adopting the report by Mrs Heinke SALISCH (PSE, D), the European Parliament defined what it understood by corruption, i.e. the behaviour of persons with public or private responsibilities who fail to fulfil their duties because a financial or other advantage has been granted or directly or indirectly offered to them. Taking this definition as a starting point, the European Parliament called for several measures to combat this menace which affected all the Member States and which, especially when coupled with organized crime, posed a threat to any democratic system which respected the environment and was based on a market economy, thus destroying public confidence in the integrity of the democratic constitutional state. While supporting the measures taken by the Council as part of the fight against fraud and corruption at European level, especially in order to protect the financial interests of the Community, Parliament called on the Member States to make bribery and the acceptance of bribes a crime offence and to take measures to encourage people who had been involved in acts of corruption to cooperate with the police and the courts. In order to combat corruption within the European institutions, Parliament called in particular for the names of natural or legal persons convicted on charges of corruption in connection with Community decisions or financing to be published in the Official Journal. Finally, Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to ban economic operators convicted of corruption from invitations to tender and withdraw their right to any form of subsidy for a give period of time. The Council should adopt a common position establishing guidelines in order for the Commission to draw up a proposal on the harmonization of the provisions and legal procedures applicable in the Member States in connection with offences of corruption. In addition, the Commission should also fight against corruption within the framework of its powers relating to the working of the internal market (distortions of competition due to tax relief on bribes etc.) and present a programme of preventive anti-corruption measures by July 1996. The Court of Auditors should act as a coordination centre for the action carried out by the various national audit offices in connection with offences of corruption. Its remit should be extended to activities under the second and third pillars of the Community. According to Parliament, market operators convicted of and sentenced for corruption should be excluded from competing for public contracts for a given period of time. Finally, Parliament recommended that Member States punish acts of corruption by members of parliament and election candidates by calling for the adoption of a regulation on this matter when the statute of the members of the European Parliament is drawn up (parliamentary duties and private professional activities should be regulated in order to avoid any conflict of interests).