Life long learning: integrated action programme comprising Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig programmes and the Jean Monnet programme

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The committee adopted the report by Doris PACK (EPP-ED , DE) amending the Commission's proposal at first reading (codecision). MEPs felt it was important to assign new ambitious objectives for the programme, as well as appropriate financial reference amounts. Accordingly, they increased the programme's multiannual budget from EUR 13.62 million to EUR 14.6 million, and made adjustments to the budget share to be allocated to the sectoral programmes: for Comenius this was increased from 10%, as originally proposed, to 12%; for Erasmus it was increased slightly from 40% to 41%; while for Leonardo Da Vinci it was reduced from 25% to 23%. The proposed 3% share for Grundtvig was left unchanged.

Other amendments focused on the specific objectives of the programme:

- the need to promote the convergence of Member States' education systems towards higher quality standards;
- encouraging interaction between education and business;
- the need to contribute to intercultural dialogue;
- emphasis on linguistic diversity, respect for human rights and democracy in the implementation of the programme;
- improving access to the programme for less-favoured persons and groups.

The committee stressed the importance it attributed to the mobility dimension of the programme and therefore increased the amounts earmarked for this purpose in the ERASMUS programme: a standard student grant of EUR 210/month in 2007, rising to EUR 300/month in 2013, as opposed to the Commission's proposal of EUR 200/month and EUR 250/month respectively. In other amendments, it wanted the Comenius programme to involve 1 pupil in 15 (rather than 1 pupil in 20) in joint educational activities between 2007 and 2013 and to develop partnerships not only between schools, as proposed, but also between "organisations responsible for any aspect of school education, with a view to fostering regional cooperation ('Comenius-Regio partnerships'). Lastly, MEPs amended the text in a number of places with the aim of simplifying the programme's management, in line with the principle of proportionality.