Active European citizenship: Europe for Citizens programme 2007-2013

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The committee adopted the report by Hannu TAKKULA (ALDE, FI) broadly approving the proposal to establish the "Citizens for Europe" programme for the period 2007-2013 to promote active European citizenship. MEPs adopted a number of amendments under the first reading of the codecision procedure:

- the words in the title should be reversed so that the programme would be called "Europe for Citizens" instead of "Citizens for Europe". MEPs felt that the original title conveyed the wrong message, i.e. that citizens should support Europe, and that the programme should reflect the fact that Europe must be the vehicle to fulfil citizens' aspirations;

- when outlining the programme's aims, reference should be made to constructing a Europe "which is multifaceted, fair, democratic and world-oriented", and to encouraging respect for multilingualism;

- a fourth action should be added to the programme: Active European Remembrance, consisting of "support for projects to commemorate the victims of Nazi and Stalinist mass deportations and mass extermination". Approximately 4% of the overall programme budget should be allocated to this action;

- the proposed budget for the period 2007-2013 (EUR 235 million) should be regarded as a minimum. The maximum period for granting funding at any one time should be three years, to prevent the beneficiaries becoming dependent on it. In a new clause, MEPs also stressed that the overall administrative expenditure of the programme, including internal and external management expenditure for the Executive Agency, should be proportional to the tasks provided for;

- the share in the overall budget for projects initiated by civil society organisations (under Action 2) should be increased from 30% to 38%;

- the 'Maisons de l'Europe' that are federated at national and European level should also qualify for structural support under Action 3 "as bodies pursuing an aim of general European interest", along with the 'Association Jean Monnet' and the 'Centre européen Robert Schuman'. The share in the overall budget for this action should be decreased from 15% to 8%;

- town-twinning activities should include the twinning of sports clubs, in particular projects involving amateur sports clubs;

- artistic events should be included among the high-profile events organised by or with the European Commission which qualify for support;

- lastly, MEPs called for the programme to be open to citizens of non-EU countries who have permanent residence rights in the EU.