Court of Auditors Special Report No 5/2005 on interpretation expenditure incurred by the Parliament, the Commission and the Council

2006/2001(INI) - 13/07/2006

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Alexander STUBB (EPP-ED, FI) in response to the Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 5/2005 on interpretation expenditure incurred by the Parliament, the Commission and the Council. MEPs began by stressing the importance of preserving multilingualism, thereby guaranteeing citizens' right to communicate with the institutions in any of the EU's official languages and hence enabling them to exercise their right of democratic control. They concluded that, "while the increasing number of official languages calls for pragmatic solutions in the preparatory work within the institutions, multilingualism must be guaranteed to ensure the legitimacy and diversity of the European Union".

However, the report expressed concern at the high proportion of costs involving services supplied but not used and stand-by arrangements, and wanted to see organisational improvements. It called for greater interinstitutional cooperation, in particular more exchanges and other arrangements between Parliament and the Commission. It also called for a reduction in travel and accomodation costs, to be achieved inter alia by better coordination, planning and organisation. The institutions were urged to facilitate the use of "local interpreters" where possible, while ensuring that a high quality of interpretation is guaranteed.

As far as Parliament was concerned, the committee noted the higher costs of interpretation, mainly as a result of the Strasbourg sessions (during which very few local interpreters can be used) and urged the EP administration to raise Members' awareness of interpretation costs. It raised the question of whether Parliament made the "best possible use" of the language profiles of its members, while stressing that "this should not lead to a ranking of official EU languages". Lastly, noting that Article 1 of the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism stipulated that resources should be allocated taking into consideration the users' real needs, the report called for Parliament's responsible bodies to adapt its calendar of committee, group and plenary session weeks in order to achieve a better balance between needs and resources available.