European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

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The committee adopted the report by Kinga GÁL (EPP-ED, HU) amending - under the consultation procedure - the proposed regulation establishing an EU Agency for Fundamental Rights:

- as well as fundamental rights issues in the Member States and candidate countries, the agency should also deal with problems in countries with which a Stabilisation and Association Agreement has been concluded;

- the Member States should nominate national liaison officers to guarantee good cooperation with the agency;

- the Agency should cooperate with organisations at international level, such as the OSCE, the UN, etc.;

- a new article provided for the creation of a network for cooperation with civil society called the 'Fundamental Rights Platform', as a mechanism for the exchange of information and the pooling of knowledge;

- to ensure complementarity and added value, the Agency should liaise with the competent bodies of the Council of Europe;

- Parliament's involvement with the new Agency should be strengthened: it should be consulted on the five year framework for the agency and on the candidates for the post of Director. Moreover, the Agency's technical expertise should be made available not only to the Council but also to Parliament;

- a new article provided for the creation of a Scientific Committee, consisting of 11 independent experts, to be "the guarantor of the scientific quality of the Agency's work, guiding the work to that effect";

- a series of amendments were adopted to the provisions governing the Management Board and the appointment of the Director.

Lastly, the committee wanted the deadline for the independent external evaluation of the Agency to be 31 December 2011, rather than 31 December 2009 as originally proposed, and said that the evaluation should include "an assessment of the possible need to modify the Agency's tasks, scope, areas of activity or structure".