European year of intercultural dialogue 2008: respect and promote cultural diversity in Europe and develop an active European citizenship

2005/0203(COD) - 01/06/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Erna **HENNICOT-SCHOEPGES** (EPP-ED, LU) and made some amendments to the Commission's proposal. The report was adopted with 548 votes in favour, 62 against and with 22 abstentions. A small majority of MEPs (299/298/17) is pressing for dialogue between religions to be the main topic of the year's events.

The principal amendments are as follows:

- a new article states that for the purposes of the Decision, the expression 'intercultural dialogue' describes a sustained process which will be given expression and a high profile in 2008 and encompass actions continuing beyond that year;

- the broad aims of the Intercultural Dialogue Year include promoting intercultural dialogue through specific intercultural dialogue projects in a number of sectors as an instrument to assist all those living in the Union to learn to live together in harmony and to overcome the differences inherent in their cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, not only between the cultures of the different Member States but also between different cultures and religious groups within Member States;

- the campaign should also highlight "the contribution of different cultures and expressions of cultural diversity to the heritage and ways of life of the Member States of the European Union";

- further highlights should also include exporting the common values of the EU in its relations with the rest of the world, thus reinforcing its role as a leader in promoting, and upholding human rights and democracy; and making education a key medium for teaching about diversity and increasing understanding of other cultures;

- intercultural dialogue should be integrated as a"horizontal and trans-sectoral priority" into Community policies, actions and programmes;

- a new clause on participation states that, in order to achieve the objectives set out, the action established by the Decision shall be implemented primarily by means of structured cooperation with cities and with local government in the first instance, since they shoulder the bulk of the challenge of immigration and integration, and also with civil society players, such as non-governmental organisations active in the field of intercultural dialogue, socio-cultural associations and the media.

The activities shall be implemented in cooperation with the European institutions, with national, regional and local authorities, and with international bodies such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO;

- since one aspect of intercultural dialogue relates to action to combat discrimination and promote integration, the activities undertaken in 2008 shall follow on from, and complement, the actions carried out in connection with the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007). The actions planned, at both Community and national level, shall take on board the experience gained from actions under the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

- the Commission will be assisted by a committee composed of one representative from each Member State and chaired by the Commission. Parliament inserted a clause stating that the national representatives shall be appointed preferably by the national coordination body. Two representatives of the European Parliament shall attend meetings of the committee as observers.

- actions at regional and local level as well as national level should be eligible for Community funding, of up to 80% of the total cost;

- the financial framework remains unchanged. A new recital states, however, that given the number of actions foreseen on a national and Community scale for all Member States, the financial envelope can be considered as the threshold value below which achievement of the objectives of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue becomes impossible;

- Parliament inserted a clause stating that preparatory action shall be limited to 30% of the overall budget;

- the financial resources dedicated to information and promotion campaigns shall not exceed 20% of the overall budget;

- a prize for intercultural dialogue should be awarded to a youth project carried out as part of Community programmes such as Socrates, Youth and Culture;

- the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue should be concluded with an Intercultural Forum in the European Parliament bringing together civil society and political and religious representatives.

Finally, MEPs called for cooperation with the private sector, broadcasters and other media as partners for disseminating information of the European year of Intercultural Dialogue, particularly in the context of major sporting events taking place in 2008, namely the European Football Championships and the Beijing Olympic Games, at the same time combating human trafficking and forced prostitution of women during these events.