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Committee on Constitutional Affairs

**PROVISIONAL
2005/2060(INI)**

21.9.2005

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs

for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

on the Commission's Fourth Report on Citizenship of the Union (1 May 2001 -
30 April 2004)
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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs calls on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Urges the Commission and the Member States to provide better information for European citizens about their rights and obligations and, in particular, actively to encourage European citizens to stand for election and to vote in municipal and European elections; believes that the Member States, working on a common basis, should integrate the European dimension into school curricula and include therein basic information about culture and the European institutions;
2. Sincerely hopes that the voting procedures used for European elections will have been reformed by 2009 so as to give the elections a genuine European dimension by standardising electoral procedures and, in particular, by ensuring that a proportion of the House is elected on the basis of transnational European lists submitted by the European political parties;
3. Welcomes the new approach to information and communication taken by the European Commission which seeks to respond more effectively to the everyday concerns of European citizens and to establish a dialogue with them so as to identify their expectations more clearly and to enable them to influence the formulation of the Union's policies by their participation in the democratic process; sincerely hopes that the impact of this new strategy will become apparent at an early date;
4. Emphasises, further, the importance for the full development of European citizenship of the right to good administration and the right of access to documents laid down in Title V (Citizenship) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights;
5. Takes the view that the conferring on European citizens who are not nationals of their Member State of residence of the right to vote and to stand for election in national and regional elections would make a tangible contribution to the feeling of belonging to the Union which is indispensable for genuine European citizenship;
6. Calls once again on the Member States to grant to third-country nationals who are long-term residents on the territory of the Union rights which are as close as possible to those enjoyed by citizens of the European Union; in this connection, takes the view that particular account must be taken of stateless persons residing on the territory of the Union;
7. Notes that, with regard to the acquisition of European citizenship and the rights attached thereto, the disparities between the provisions governing access to nationality in the Member States actually lead to discrimination between residents who are third-country nationals or stateless on the basis of their Member State of residence; deems, therefore, desirable the approximation of the conditions for the acquisition of nationality laid down in the laws of the various Member States, with due regard being taken of the Member States' powers in this field;

8. Calls, more generally, for consideration to be given to the possibility of recasting the concept of European citizenship, principally so as to dissociate it from the criterion of nationality of a Member State and, in particular, to allow account to be taken not only of the criterion of nationality but also that of residence on the territory of the Union;
9. Emphasises that, irrespective of the specific solution that will ultimately be adopted, a European Constitution which clearly lays down the values on which the Union is founded and the fundamental rights of its citizens, spells out its powers and establishes its institutions and decision-making procedures will contribute to a feeling of belonging to the Union and, hence, of European citizenship;
10. Takes the view that the creation of a European tax paid by European citizens, without, however, increasing the overall tax burden, would not only provide a way of escaping from the current deadlock caused by the financing of the Community budget from Member State contributions and the concept of a 'fair return' but would also contribute to the affirmation of a balanced European citizenship based as much on rights as on obligations.