Equal opportunities between men and women: 4th action programme 1996-2000

1995/0206(CNS) - 22/11/1995 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The ESC welcomed the basic thrust and objectives of the fourth action programme and stressed once again that equal opportunities should be a constant Community concern. The Commission could be proud of its legislative achievements emanating from Article 119 and complementary articles. Much still remained to be done however. Networking, partnership, active information exchange, mobilisation of public opinion and concerted efforts to achieve a fundamental change of attitudes with regard to the role of women in society were all, no doubt, vital. Likewise, ‘support pilot projects’ and the promotion of ‘30 to 40 Integrated Equality Projects throughout Europe’ would also commendably scratch away at the surface of societal prejudice and continuing discrimination against women. The ESC stressed, however, that, in the final event, it was in terms of real equality before the law and in the application of law that concrete progress towards effective equality of opportunity would continue to be made. The ESC urged the Intergovernmental Conference to consider incorporating the principle of equality and equal treatment in the Treaty, including a provision for positive measures so as to give a firm legal base to equality. It welcomed the Commission’s emphasis on promoting equality in a changing economy by encouraging women’s entrepreneurship and through mechanisms of mainstreaming, studies and greater information dissemination. It noted with regret that no measures or actions had been proposed in the programme that focused on health and safety issues at work or the problems associated with all forms of atypical work. It also regretted that no specific measures were included in the programme that addressed the issues associated with homeworking. The ESC was in favour of the Commission’s proposal for a framework directive for the care of children and other dependents. It reminded the Commission that such legislative initiatives needed to be accompanied by appropriate financial commitments.