Part-time work: framework agreement concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC

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The Committee adopted a report by Mrs Karin JÖNS (EPS, D), which studies the framework agreement on part-time work. The agreement, concluded and signed by the social partners in June 1997, has a twofold purpose. On the one hand, it aims at removing discrimination against part-time workers and improving their working conditions. In addition, it seeks to facilitate the development of part-time work on a voluntary basis so that it would contribute to the flexible organization of working time. In the report, the Committee approves the principle of non-discrimination against part-time workers, but criticizes the fact that the agreement is limited to part-time work, and does not cover all forms of atypical employment. The agreement excludes social security matters which would need to be governed by legislation. Without such a basis, Member States and social partners can make exceptions to the principle of non-discrimination for "technical" or "objective" reasons, such as part-time workers who work only on a casual basis, or who do not qualify certain thresholds based on length of service, working time and salary conditions. The Committee believes that the current agreement can represent only the beginning of legal instruments required to gradually remove discrimination against people working in atypical forms of employment. The agreement should contribute to overcoming the gender-specific segregation of the labour market. It cannot justify any discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, ethnic origins, religion, age or sexual orientation. The Committee calls on the Commission to submit as soon as possible a proposal for a directive which would govern the social security legislation aspects of part-time work on a non-discriminatory basis. It reserves the right to take a parliamentary initiative should the Commission fail to present a proposal which covers all the outstanding aspects in full.