Social policy agenda: following the European Councils of Lisbon and Feira, Council of Nice, December 2000

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The committee adopted the report by Anne VAN LANCKER (PES, B) on the Commission communication on the new social policy agenda for the medium term. The report was drawn up with a view to the expected conclusion of an agreement on the SPA at the Nice European Council in December. The committee shared the Commission·s view that the social agenda should be very ambitious in order to reinforce the notion that social, economic and employment policy were inter-related and should be given equal priority in order to improve quality of life for all. For reasons of credibility, the committee nevertheless called for the Commission to distinguish more clearly between new projects and decisions already taken, and to define the Union·s real priorities. It also urged the Commission to assess and reinforce the legislative framework currently in force, to define how the social agenda would be implemented and to ensure that its measures resulted in concrete legislative proposals. The report called on the Commission to take a number of steps to reinforce the new social agenda, such as: introducing a Community strategy on health and safety at work; revising directives on the collective and individual rights of workers, and introducing a new directive on protection against unwarranted dismissal; establishing the right to an income, a pension or minimum salary; adapting and reducing working time through consultation with social partners; and proposing an action plan for the inclusion of older and disabled workers into working life and the information society. Finally, the committee called for an annual assessment of the implementation of the social agenda, including the gender mainstreaming aspects, to be made at the spring European Council, and for the Commission to draw up a ·scoreboard· showing the players involved, the instruments and the deadlines for each action.