Preparation of the 4th action programme on equal opportunities between men and women

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The committee adopted the report by Mrs d'ANCONA (PSE, NL) on the implementation of the third programme and the proposals for the fourth equal opportunities action programme. The report deplores the lack of criteria by which the success of the third programme can be measured (calling for such criteria to be included in the fourth programme) and welcomes the fact that the Commission intends to publish an annual report on equal treatment and introduce a system for monitoring the implementation of equal opportunities in all Union policies. As regards the fourth action programme, which the Commission is due to present over the coming months, the report stresses the need for it to concentrate on a more limited number of sectors than the previous programme in order to ensure that the resources allocated to it are not spread too thinly between too many measures. The Committee on Women's Rights also hopes that the partnership between the Union, the Member States and the social partners will be developed, considering that the Member States, social partners and non-governmental organizations have a fundamental part to play in defining the approach and priorities of projects in practice on the ground. More substantial resources should be allocated to programmes implemented in the Member States and information and public awareness campaigns should be improved. The fourth programme should also help to reconcile home and working life and pay closer attention to the needs of less advantaged women, such as older women, refugees and immigrants. The report stresses the need for existing legislation in this area to be applied more strictly and for the Commission to take sanctions against Member States who fail to do so. With regard to the concept of "full citizenship" debated during the UNO conferences in Cairo and Vienna, the Committee on Women's Rights feels that it should include economic, political, social and cultural activities and that full citizenship can only be achieved if there is a fair division of public and private responsibilities between men and women. Finally, the report calls on all the European institutions to introduce and follow a policy of positive action as regards their own staff.