The need to establish a European-Union-wide campaign for zero tolerance of violence against women

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Sexual violence is an expression of the inequality of power ratios in our society and constitutes a huge obstacle to efforts to abolish inequality of the sexes. This was one of the many considerations which persuaded the committee to adopt the report by Mrs ERIKSSON on the need for a European "zero tolerance" campaign on violence against women. The Member States were called upon to make violence against women a criminal act and to adopt specific legislation to protect the victims of sexual violence. The report highlighted the need to set up programmes in schools to make girls and boys aware of the consequences of sexual violence and to promote initiatives to help victims of violence, in particular, of trafficking in women. Those responsible for trafficking in women should be prosecuted and punished and re-educated under suitable national programmes. The report calls on Member States to support and finance independent services for the victims of violence and to set up agencies responsible for obtaining the cooperation of services which help women and the children in their charge to rebuild their lives. Women in third countries who were subject to or threatened with sexual violence should be able to enter the European Union and the Council was called on to adopt provisions in this direction within the framework of immigration policy. A clause on respect for women's rights should also be incorporated in agreements concluded with third countries. The committee called for 1999 to be designated as the European Year Against Violence Against Women and for the Commission to examine the result of campaigns already implemented in the Member States so that the most successful elements could be used for a Europe-wide campaign launched during the European Year Against Violence Against Women. This campaign should be based on the defence of victims, the prevention of violence and the rehabilitation of aggressors. A budget line for the Year Against Violence Against Women and for organizing the campaign should be proposed by the European Commission in order to ensure that sufficient appropriations were available.