Combating organized crime: trafficking in women, further actions following the COM(1996) 0567

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The committee adopted a report by Patsy SÖRENSEN (Greens/EFA, B) on the Commission communication on further actions in the fight against trafficking in women. Stressing the links between trafficking in human beings on the one hand and immigration and asylum policies on the other, the committee first called on the IGC to bring EU policy in this area of criminal justice entirely within the Community pillar. It then called for the Union to draw up a clear, harmonised definition of "trafficking" (to cover, for example, all practices akin to slavery, forced prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced marriages). To this end a legal framework should be laid down at EU level and effective measures taken in the areas of prevention, protection and aid to victims. In addition, Member States and EU applicant countries should deploy their legislative, administrative and police resources to combat trafficking. They should also develop international cooperation, in particular with Europol and Interpol, to defeat the criminal networks which were in large measure responsible for the problem. The report advocated a number of measures, such as Community harmonisation of national methods for detecting traffickers and bringing them to justice (for example, guarantees of protection for women who agree to give evidence and a reversal of the burden of proof so that it was placed upon the alleged trafficker), and information campaigns in victims' countries of origin. Other proposals put forward included encouraging Member States to prevent abuses of new technologies, in particular the internet, which boosts the market for traffickers (e.g. by offering women for sale), and raising public awareness of the results of trafficking in women (mainly by targeting the male population). Lastly, the committee called on the media to observe their professional ethical codes and to limit or even refuse advertising for the sex trade so as not to play into the hands of the traffickers.