Equal pay for work of equal value

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Miet SMET (EPP-ED, B) on equal pay for work of equal value. The committee noted that the wage gap between men and women in the EU was 28% and, after taking account of structural differences in the labour market, including age, training, occupation and career patterns, women's pay was still 15% lower. It argued that this discrepancy could only be explained by value discrimination mechanisms, which was unacceptable. It wanted the causes of the problem to be studied so that the position of women in the labour market could be improved. The report welcomed the setting up by the Commission of a group of experts to improve the collection of statistical data but called for this data to be broken down by gender and sector, taking account of atypical work, which was more widespread among women. It added that using descriptive indicators alone was not enough and called for interpretative indicators to be applied, such as the link between the need to reconcile work and family commitments on the one hand and salary levels on the other. The committee welcomed the inclusion of these objectives in the draft employment guidelines for 2002 and backed the Belgian Presidency's plan to place special emphasis on equal pay. It also supported the Commission's plan to carry out a campaign on equal pay in 2002 and asked the Commission, in the light of this campaign, to propose a revised version of the 1975 directive on equal pay, which would cover gender-neutral job evaluation. Lastly, the two sides of industry were urged to include more women in wage negotiations. The committee highlighted the need to eliminate female ghettos in certain low-paid jobs. The Member States were asked to take steps to enable women to overcome the many hurdles preventing them from reaching senior positions and to eliminate the "glass ceiling" which was present throughout society.