Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Lissy GRÖNER (PES, D) on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament. It called for a policy plan whose key objective would be to incorporate the gender perspective in Parliament's policies and activities, including its decision-making structures, thereby enabling the different impact of measures on women and men to be assessed before decisions are taken. The plan would involve inter alia setting up a High-level Group on Gender Equality (composed of the EP President, the Bureau, the Chairs of the relevant committees and the Secretary-General), incorporating gender analysis into all stages of the budgetary process and implementing an effective press and information policy which systematically takes into account gender equality and avoids gender stereotypes. The report suggested a series of guidelines for implementing gender mainstreaming in the work of committees and delegations: appointing a member responsible for ensuring that this approach is applied in the committee or delegation; making an annual assessment of activities and achievements in this field; and ensuring that committees and delegations are assisted by suitably trained staff. It also called for an annual report on this subject, including the identification and assessment of any failures, to be drawn up and submitted to plenary. The Conference of Presidents was urged to discuss how gender could be mainstreamed in the activities of the political groups, if necessary by amending the EP's Rules of Procedure, with a view to guaranteeing balance between women and men in the EP's Bureau and in the bureaux of the committees and delegations. Looking ahead to enlargement and to the 2004 elections, the committee wanted the applicant countries to be encouraged to establish programmes and campaigns for female politicians and candidates to ensure that they are prepared for the EU institutions and that the percentage of women MEPs increases. As far as the EP Secretariat was concerned, the report pointed out that Article 141 of the EC Treaty and the amended directive on equal treatment allowed for positive measures to favour the under-represented sex in recruitment, career development and other professional activity. It stressed the importance of training as a means of supporting changes in attitude and behaviour at all levels. The committee also said that working arrangements and measures enabling women and men to combine work and family life was a priority area. It therefore wanted to see the introduction of provisions enabling more staff to work part-time or to work flexible hours, as well as the extension of teleworking on a voluntary basis to services other than translation. Moreover, there was a need to address issues such as long working hours, late meetings and missions. Finally, the report supported the idea of an anti-discrimination provision, in line with Article 13 of the Treaty, and the reversal of the burden of proof in cases of discrimination, as put forward in the Commission proposal to amend the Staff Regulations for EC officials.