Equal opportunities for women and men in the European Union. 6th annual report 2001

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The committee adopted the report by Rodi KRATSA (EPP-ED, GR) on the Commission's annual report for 2001. As regards the Community framework strategy (2001-2005), it welcomed the Commission's efforts to promote gender equality in the various areas of EU policy but regretted the lack of a body responsible for gender mainstreaming in the Council of Ministers and the fact that there had been little encouragement for women to participate in applications. As regards the 2001-2005 action programme on gender equality, the committee welcomed the choice of equal pay as the priority theme for 2001 but called on the Commission to present a new proposal to reinforce the employment guideline aimed at equal pay, including national targets for reducing wage differentials. It also wanted to see research carried out into the reasons for the pay disparity and urged the Commission to disseminate best practices as widely as possible. Welcoming the choice of reconciliation of work and family life as a priority theme for 2002, the report stressed the importance of collecting statistics by gender and establishing common indicators for childcare facilities and pay differentials between men and women, by sector, and for atypical and part-time work. With regard to the participation of women in the decision-making process (the priority theme for 2003), the committee called on the EU Member States to develop new mechanisms and strategies, including the use of quotas, for achieving equal representation of women and men at all levels of the decision-making process. As far as gender equality legislation was concerned, the report urged the Commission to amend the existing directives as soon as possible and also made recommendations for the Commission's forthcoming proposal for a new directive based on Article 13 of the Treaty. In addition, the committee called for the European Ombudsman's responsibilities to be extended with particular reference to women's rights in cases of maladministration and for the appointment of a deputy ombudsman responsible for gender equality. On the question of enlargement, external relations and development cooperation, the committee welcomed the Commission's new initiative to integrate gender equality into the EU's external relations, but stressed the need to prevent and stamp out the trafficking of human beings, achieve a better integration of gender issues into development cooperation policy and promote cooperation between women in European countries and partner countries in the context of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.