Equal opportunities for men and women in the European Union. 2002 7th annual report

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Joke SWIEBEL (PES, NL) in response to the Commission's 2002 Annual Report on Equal Ppportunities in the EU. It welcomed the Commission's efforts in many policy areas, but expressed regret that a number of Commission departments seemed to be rather unwilling to incorporate gender mainstreaming into their policies. MEPs called on the 10 Commissioners responsible to report back to Parliament by the end of 2004 on the measures they had taken to improve matters. The committee also regretted that the Commission's report made little reference to actions to ensure that current equal opportunities legislation was being properly applied by the Member States and called on the Commission to include a separate chapter on this subject in future annual reports. The committee argued that the Commission should pursue a policy to put an end to the disappointing level of women's involvement in, and access to, the new information and communication technologies. It also noted the particularly weak position, in terms of employment rights and social protection, often faced by spouses in rural areas, calling on the Commission and Member States to pay particular attention to this issue. The report called for rapid progress to be made in tackling trafficking in human beings, and urged the Commission to carry out a study into the situation of victims of trafficking who are unable to return to their country of origin because of problems with their families or real threats to their safety. MEPs asked the Commission to consider whether, in such circumstances, the individuals concerned should be authorised to remain in the EU. Regarding the Commission's 2003 work programme, MEPs regretted the fact that the priority actions set out simply repeated the aims of the 2002 programme. They called on the Commission to explain why fewer women were appointed to serve on committees and expert groups in 2002 than in 2001. They also emphasised the need for positive action to implement the Framework Strategy in gender equality, notably regarding the inclusion of women in the decision-making process. Finally, the committee welcomed the Commission's proposal for a draft directive on the promotion of equal treatment for men and women in access to and the supply of goods and services, and was "delighted" that Commissioner Diamantopoulou was proposing to publish a Green Paper on a comprehensive EU anti-discrimination policy.