The situation of women from minority groups in the European Union

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by María Elena VALENCIANO MARTÍNEZ-OROZCO (PES, E) on the situation of women from minority groups in the European Union. The report focused in particular on the problems facing disabled women, migrant women, and women from the Roma community. These three groups were often faced with multiple discrimination, on the grounds of sex and because they were members of minorities. MEPs said that anti-discrimination measures should take account of these issues, and proposed a number of practical steps for tackling them. As far as disabled women were concerned, the report urged the Member States to ensure that the 2000 Directive on equal treatment in employment and occupation is incorporated into law and implemented as soon as possible. Moreover, the interests and needs of disabled women should be taken into account in all relevant policies, programmes and Community instruments such as the European Social Fund, the combating of social exclusion, initiatives connected to the information society, etc. The Member States were urged to encourage disabled women's access to education, training and employment in an ordinary environment, the formation of networks of disabled women and support groups and the involvement of disabled women in political life and decision-making processes. The media should be involved in initiatives to change attitudes and behaviour towards disabled women. MEPs called on the Member States to draw up a strategy to promote the integration of migrant women in the host country. This could include: organising affordable courses in the host country's language and general culture; increasing public service staff's awareness of cultural diversity and gender equality; and promoting awareness campaigns among migrant populations on the importance of education for women and girls. The committee also recommended that Member States and Community bodies take particular account of the situation of Muslim women in the EU and take measures to protect these women against violation of their human rights, in religious communities, and against practices that "hinder their education, training, employment, advancement and above all integration in the host countries". In addition, the report called for measures against female genital mutilation and forced marriages, and for measures that recognise this type of persecution as a legitimate reason for requesting asylum. With regard to Roma women, MEPs drew attention to the need to ensure that Community and national policies which could improve the situation of this group of women were properly applied and that the issues concerning them were included in all relevant employment policies and programmes, the European Social Fund, the Daphne programme, etc. Moreover, Roma women should be consulted when programmes or measures likely to affect them were being drawn up. Lastly, the governments concerned were urged to take steps to improve the reproductive and sexual health protection of Roma women, to prevent and put an end to forced sterilisation, and to promote family planning and alternative arrangements to early marriages.