European year against racism in 1997: implementation. Report

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The committee adopted by an overwhelming majority the report by Sarah LUDFORD (ELDR, UK) on countering racism and xenophobia in the European Union. The committee argued that ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe was a source of social vitality which was essential for Europe·s economic and social future. It therefore expressed horror at the entry into government in Austria of Jörg Haider's Freedom Party. As regards fundamental rights and policies to promote equality, it called for a positive duty to be laid on Member States' public authorities and EU institutions to promote racial equality and to take positive action to achieve a more ethnically diverse workforce. It would like the main responsibility in the fight against racism and xenophobia and the promotion of equal opportunities to be a task explicitly allocated to one Commissioner. Regarding education, the report urged the authorities of the Member States to strengthen awareness-raising of racism and racial diversity among all sections of the population, and in respect of young people to include, as formal requirements of school curricula and teacher training programmes, teaching about Europe in the world, including slavery and colonialism, and the history and culture of minority communities, the dangers of racism, xenophobia and intolerance, including the Holocaust and anti-semitism, and the importance of racial tolerance and the value of diversity. The committee called on all political parties to sign and observe the "Charter of European parties for a non-racist society", to condemn intolerance and racist remarks or behaviour and to refrain from choosing candidates and cooperating with political groups who subscribed to racist and xenophobic objectives. In the area of police and judicial cooperation, the report urged the EU and member governments to give top priority to the fight against organised violence motivated by xenophobia and racial hatred, including the links with racism in football, and to combating illegal trafficking in migrants. The committee also called on the EU and Member States to ensure that within a single asylum system, the Convention on Refugees was fully applied and that immigration legislation and policy did not discriminate on grounds of ethnic or national origin, avoided stoking up xenophobic attitudes or discriminatory and hostile behaviour to ethnic minorities, and gave similar rights of free movement and family unity to third country nationals as to Member State citizens.