Preparation of the 4th action programme on equal opportunities between men and women

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In its resolution on the assessment of the third Community action programme on equal opportunities between men and women and the proposals for the next (fourth) programme, the European Parliament stressed the importance of having sufficient financial resources to implement all the projects proposed in the programme. In particular, it deplored the lack of criteria by which the success of the third programme could be measured and called for precise criteria to be included by which the impact of the next programme could be assessed. It felt that the various aspects of the equal treatment policy contained in the third programme should continue to be integrated and that this integration should be monitored by ensuring that there was clearer political and budgetary involvement on the part of the Commission. With regard to the content of the projects implemented, it felt that the overly large number of measures taken under third programme had tended to water down resources. The fourth programme should concentrate on a limited number of sectors, but in greater depth. It also called for more resources to be allocated to the practicalities of the programmes implemented in the Member States and for public awareness campaigns to be better tailored to the needs of specific national programmes. Parliament welcomed the fact that the Commission had announced that it would be drafting an annual report on the equal treatment of men and women and introducing a system for monitoring the inclusion of equal treatment in all Union policies. At the same time, it called for a more comprehensive definition of the national programmes implemented in 1994 under the third programme and for Member States to be required to inform the European Parliament on equal treatment issues. The European Parliament again urged the Commission to find innovative ways for women to reconcile their working and home lives and to promote them in the fourth programme (giving priority to single-parent families, older women, refugees and immigrants). In particular, it called on the Commission to promote measures designed to encourage the social partners and companies to guarantee vacancies where women were under-represented. The Community institutions should make a special effort here as regards their own staff. It also stressed the need for the Member States to apply all European legislation on equal opportunities correctly and called for a change of attitude towards women, who should see their involvement in working life develop harmoniously.