Equal Opportunities for women and men in the Union. 1996 report

1997/2028(COS) - 16/09/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Marie-Paule KESTELIJN-SIERENS (ELDR, B) on the Commission's first Annual Report on equal opportunities, Parliament regretted the lack of evaluation and analysis. It called on the Commission to ensure that its next report included: - a greater focus on developments in the year in question, - more examples illustrating the situation in Member States, - a glossary of terminology in the field of equal opportunities, - greater analysis of the issues so that the report could form the basis of a debate on future strategy. In addition, Parliament hoped that the next report would give special attention to the consequences of enlargement with reference to the acquis communautaire in terms of equal opportunities. It hoped, in particular, that the Commission would present an annual progress report on mainstreaming (integration of equal opportunities into all policies) and that: - new Community legislation would contain a gender-impact assessment, - Member States and the Council would step up their monitoring of the application of the principle of mainstreaming, - the Commission would establish the structures and provide the funding necessary for the application of mainstreaming. As regards the Beijing Conference, Parliament regretted that the Annual Report did not give a comprehensive overview of steps taken in Member States to implement the Platform for Action established in Beijing. It consequently called for this Platform for Action to become the frame of reference for the implementation of policies promoting the role of women in the Union. It asked that, given the decline in the number of women participating in decision-making, policies should be implemented in order to correct this trend in Member States. It also called on the Commission to consider in its next report the obstacles to women's access to decision-making posts and, in particular, to give details, in its 1997 report, of the specific situation of women within Community institutions. As regards the economy, Parliament considered that men and women should be treated equally in terms of taxation and social benefits. It called on the Commission to put forward a proposal to amend Directive 86/613 on equal treatment for self-employed women and men, with a view to guaranteeing the visibility of and professional status for women who help in family businesses. It called on the Commission once more to indicate the steps which had been taken involving the principle of 'equal pay for work of equal value' in the Member States and to ensure that measures were adopted to end this split in the labour market. It was important to put an end to this situation of exclusion in which women found themselves. As regards combining work and family life, Parliament called on the Member States to find ways of introducing more flexibility into the labour market. However, this flexibility should not adversely affect women, who may continue to be available in large numbers on the labour market. Finally, as regards women's rights, Parliament was satisfied with the new Article 6a in the Treaty of Amsterdam on combating sexual, racial and ethnic discrimination and hoped that, on this basis, measures would be taken to combat racism involving female immigrants.