Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities (mainstreaming)

1996/2036(COS) - 16/09/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Angela KOKKOLA (PSE, G) on incorporating the principle of 'mainstreaming' into Community policies and activities, Parliament noted that the Commission had taken a huge step forward with its Communication by recognizing that women had only enjoyed their full share of society's benefits in theory, and not in practice. It believed that the implementation of this principle should not be hindered by considerations of cultural values and traditions, rigid societal structures or the demands of competitiveness. It welcomed the fact that the equal opportunities had been incorporated into most policies in the Draft Treaty of Amsterdam, and called for the establishment of an interinstitutional working party to make the objective of equal treatment between men and women a concern in all Community activities. It pointed out that European efforts, because they were limited to areas of competence enshrined in the Treaties, had to be imitated by the Member States in their own national policies, in order to increase awareness of policies in this field and to ensure through them a true sense of equal opportunities and rights. Parliament noted once more that there was an economic need for greater participation of women in the workforce to compensate, in particular, for the expected ageing of the EU population. Equal rights for women in professional activities should allow them to achieve financial independence. It was convinced that, to enable women to play a more active role professionally, social services should be made available to help care for dependants (children and the elderly) and believed that more emphasis should be put on education, training and public transport. Parliament was convinced that there should be increased investment (particularly financial investment) to improve the availability of support structures which would contribute to equal opportunities. It drew attention to the fact that there should be a genuine sharing of tasks in family life. In this respect, it invited the Commission to study ways in which fiscal measures and specific social security benefits could be used to help give work in the family official recognition within the economy. In addition, the issue of equal pay should continue to be actively promoted at all levels. Parliament regretted the fact that women working with their spouses within family businesses still did not have official status in some Member States. It asked the Member States immediately to look into this matter and to organize campaigns, pending the introduction of such a status, with women's organizations, the professions, independent entrepreneurs and SMUs, with a view to informing the women concerned and their spouses of their legal status. They should also be informed about all the possibilities made available through voluntary regulations on the basis of company law and the laws on inherited wealth and inheritance which might improve their legal status. As regards Community legislation, aside from the 'mainstreaming' dimension, the 'gender perspective' concept (consideration of the gender dimension and possible repercussions on situations and policies) should be included. Parliament also called on the Commission to reach agreement on priority action concerning the principle of mainstreaming in specifically targeted Social Fund actions that could be assessed according to specific criteria. In addition, it underlined the fact that this principle should be taken into consideration during the negotiations surrounding the next enlargement. Finally, it asked that, within the Commission itself, each unit in the Directorate-Generals appoint an official to ensure that the 'mainstreaming' criteria were being correctly applied.