The need to establish a European-Union-wide campaign for zero tolerance of violence against women

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In adopting the report by Mrs Marianne ERIKSSON (GUE/NGL, S) on violence against women, Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States of the United Nations to convert the Beijing Declaration into a Convention which was binding on all signatories and to make violence against women a criminal act. It asked the Member States of the Union to introduce specific legislation, outside criminal law in the strict sense of the term, designed to protect victims of gender-based violence and specific provisions against the harassment of women. Similarly, it stressed the importance of removing any obstacles that deterred victims from pursuing cases against their attackers. Consequently, it called on the Member States carefully to revise procedures in this field. Parliament suggested that there should be specific training for all those working with victims and that such training should be compulsory for judges presiding over cases of sexual violence. Programmes in schools aimed at enhancing awareness should also be planned to counteract behaviour which tended to regard women's bodies as objects. It called on the Commission to investigate the link between violence against women and violence against children. It called on the Member States to combat pornography, especially pornography involving children that was available on the Internet. It called on the Commission and on the Member States, in their programmes to combat violence against women, to support initiatives designed to help victims rebuild their lives, to establish 24-hour help lines for women in distress and to support the NGOs involved in this field. It called on both the Commission and the Member States to investigate the role of alcohol in violence against women. It suggested that, in serious cases, women's organizations or appropriate institutions should be allowed to take legal action when the victims were unable to take action. Parliament proposed that funds be earmarked in the Fifth Framework Programme of Research for investigation into the costs of men's violence against women (in terms of health care, housing, social services, lost days at work). Parliament urged the Council of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs to adopt statutory provisions on immigration and asylum applications so that women who were threatened or persecuted were admitted to the EU and that those who were separated from a violent husband were not deported from the Community. It called for the incorporation of provisions on women's rights in agreements between the EU and third countries. Finally, it called for 1999 to be designated as European Year Against Violence Against Women and called on the Commission to propose a dedicated budget line for a Europe-wide campaign. This should be based on the most successful elements of national campaigns already implemented and should be based on the defence of survivors of abuse. Its main objective would be to alter attitudes in society so that zero tolerance of violence against women was achieved at individual, collective and institutional level.