Discrimination against women in advertising

1996/2242(INI) - 16/09/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Marlene LENZ (PPE, D) on discrimination against women in advertising, Parliament welcomed the fact that abolishing all discrimination on grounds of sex had been included in the Draft Treaty of Amsterdam, although it was disappointed with the decision-making procedures that had been chosen. It called on the Member States to introduce legislation that would prevent any form of pornography in advertising. As regards more specifically the advertising industry and the media, Parliament rejected the dissemination of images of women which denigrated the dignity of women or their equality with the male sex in commercial communication. It called for a fight against sexist stereotypes in the content, images and language of advertising. It also called on the advertising industry to abandon the denigration of women as sex objects for men through technical means and visual representations such as reducing the female role to external beauty and sexual willingness. In Parliament's view, it was important to carry out activities that would encourage a change in values in this respect. Equally, it called for women's importance in society, at work, in the family or in public life to be stressed. It also called for a more balanced participation by women and men at the production and decision-making levels of the advertising industry and the media. Similarly, Parliament recommended the setting up of a code of ethics for television advisory councils in the Member States where this had not already happened. Parliament called on the national advertising standards authorities to ensure that consumers were made more aware of procedure objectives, the principles of control of advertising and their right to complain. It hoped that the European Advertising Standards Authority (EASA) would become a self-regulatory body for the European advertising sector. This body would be responsible for drawing up European principles for the advertising media, particularly as regards discrimination in advertising, and it would have control and be able to give recommendations in cases involving cross-border advertising. Parliament also urged the self-regulatory bodies to reach agreement on efficient forms of monitoring advertising in respect of the new media and called on the Commission to encourage all those concerned to draw up a self-regulation core to combat all forms of discrimination. The Commission should, moreover, continue its efforts aimed to achieve a realistic portrayal in the media of modern women. In this respect, the existing European legal framework for advertising should be revised, taking these issues into consideration. Similarly, Parliament supported the Commission in its plan to create a consistent legal framework for the protection of human dignity and against the abuse of audiovisual and information services. Finally, Parliament suggested to the Commission that a European advertising prize should be awarded by analogy with the NIKI prize.