The impact of unemployment on the situation of women

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Adopting the report by Mrs Elena MARINUCCI (PSE, I) on the impact of unemployment on the situation of women, the European Parliament believed there was a need for a new definition of unemployment more accurately reflecting the varying nature of women's economic activity. It called on the Commission to publish systematically statistics which highlight the status of women's employment. It stressed that part-time work can only help overcome unemployment if it is voluntary, not subject to rigid anti-social hours and does not involve a reduction in social protection or career prospects. A specific definition of part-time work needed to be drawn up and legislation on the right to part-time work provided. Part-time work also needed to be extended voluntarily to skilled work and men as well as women needed to be encouraged to take up part-time posts. It called on the social partners to conclude a framework agreement on all forms of atypical work, including homework and teleworking, in which women predominate, and called on the Commission to bring forward suitable legislation, should the social partners fail to reach agreement. The European Parliament reiterated its call for a framework directive on childcare services in the Member States and regulations on parental leave attractive to both men and women, with proper payment for the period and the maintenance of social security rights. Finally, it suggested that the period of leave from the job market taken by people to bring up children or look after an aged person should be recognised for pension-entitlement purposes, so ensuring that they are not penalised for carrying out their family responsibilities. It reiterated its call for the individualisation of rights to social protection and urged the Member States and the Commission to ensure that vocational training programmes go hand in hand with measures to desegregate the labour market. It also called for positive ad hoc action in favour of jobs for women et for training to be targeted at sectors where jobs are available. The European Parliament invited the Commission and the Member States to recognise the importance of job creation to women's entrepreneurship by encouraging and developing initiatives such as special loan facilities for women setting up small businesses. It called on Member States, in executing their Structural Fund programmes, to ensure that projects provide employment to women and called for new Structural Fund Regulations to make specific provision for appropriations to combat women's unemployment. Finally, it called on the European Union and the Member States to make provision in the next Employment Guidelines for: - reducing the gender gap in unemployment; - women's full participation in the labour market; - provision, at prices affordable in relation to the family income, of care for children, relatives and dependent persons; - participation of women in training and in measures for reinsertion in the labour market; - equal access for men and women to part-time work, career breaks and parental leave in all sectors of activity; - eliminating the gender gap in earnings.