Mid-term assessment of the Lisbon strategy from a gender perspective

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Edite ESTRELA (PSE, PT) on the future of the Lisbon strategy from a gender perspective. The report voiced concern at the continuing disparities between women and men, particularly as regards the pay gap, access to employment, segregation on the employment market and access to post-university education, lifelong training, new technologies and the information society. Noting that, in the enlarged EU, the average pay gap is 15% but can be as much as 33% in some countries, MEPs called on Member States to make the reduction of the wage-gap an " absolute priority on their political agenda."

The report also stressed the importance of flexible working hours in encouraging women to work and in promoting social inclusion. It endorsed the use of teleworking and stressed the need to implement fully the quantified objectives for the establishment of day-care facilities as agreed upon by the Barcelona European Council. Moreover, Member States should promote appropriate systems of parental leave for men and organise awareness-raising campaigns with the aim of encouraging men to take on a fairer share of family responsibilities and take up the possibilities offered by flexible organisation of working hours and new forms of employment.

MEPs urged the Member States to continue efforts to modernise their social protection systems in order to ensure that women enjoy the same pension rights as men and are employed to the same degree. They also reiterated the need to place lifelong learning at the heart of the Lisbon Strategy and emphasised the importance of training women in new technologies. The Member States should promote school guidance aimed at diversifying young girls' career choices in order to guarantee them better opportunities on the labour market.

The report lamented the fact that achieving the Lisbon Strategy goals had primarily been pursued through collaboration between governments and not through regional, local, educational, business and social cooperation. Lastly, it underlined the importance of fully involving the European Parliament in evaluating the Lisbon Strategy in terms of gender.