Framework strategy for non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Tatjana ŽDANOKA (Greens/EFA, LV) in response to the Commission communication on a framework strategy for non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all. The report pointed out that discrimination largely stems from ignorance of other people and that the problem should therefore be tackled at source, by means of targeted actions designed to foster tolerance and diversity from early childhood. It added that, although there may be a need for "temporary recourse to positive measures based on a 'proactive' concept of justice and possibly taking very different forms", the establishment of quotas must be regarded as an "extreme measure". MEPs said that it was essential to give a clear definition of positive action and "to stress that positive action is not positive discrimination".

The report gave examples of what might be considered 'positive action': overhauling recruitment policies and practices, taking steps to bring opportunities to the attention of disadvantaged groups, setting targets to improve the representation of such groups within the workforce or providing assistance to help them participate in society as a whole. Targets for such action could include women and ethnic minorities, including the Roma people.

Welcoming the Commission's plans for 2007 to be the European Year of Equal Opportunities, the committee called for measures launched during this year to be continued in 2008, under the auspices of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

It deplored the fact that the European Charter of Fundamental Rights had not yet been made legally binding, and called on the Commission to fulfil its obligations as guardian of the treaties by taking action against any Member States which fail fully to transpose EU anti-discrimination legislation into national law. The report urged the Commission to present a new legislative instrument covering all the grounds for discrimination under Article 13 of the EC Treaty before mid-2007.

Among other points, the committee also called for the prohibition of discrimination against same-sex couples, either married or in a registered partnership, when exercising their right to free movement enshrined in EU law. It says the principle of mutual recognition should apply in this field too.