Equality women and men: integrated approach in the parliamentary committees' work

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Anna ZÁBORSKÁ (EPP-ED, SK) on gender mainstreaming in the work of the EP's committees. The report pointed out that, although the number of female MEPs had steadily increased over the years (from 17.5% in 1979 to 30.33% in 2004), within Parliament's administration women were under-represented in positions of responsibility in bodies responsible for taking political decisions. Although most committees had expressed support for gender mainstreaming, few of them had included any mainstreaming strategy when establishing their future political priorities. However, half the committees were "greatly interested" in gender mainstreaming in their secretariats.

The committee stressed that calls for gender equality must be translated into a practical approach which does not set women against men, and said that gender mainstreaming would lead to "positive developments" for both sexes. It added that mainstreaming cannot replace specific policies which aim to redress situations resulting from gender inequality.

The report committed Parliament to adopting and applying within its administration a gender mainstreaming strategy with specific targets in Community policies, to be developed by the end of the current legislative term at the latest. It also stressed the important role which the political groups could play in making it possible for women to participate fully in public life by including gender mainstreaming in their programmes and activities. Political parties across Europe were urged to introduce a compulsory quota system on their lists for any collective body.

Parliament's Secretary-General was encouraged to continue the training of officials in gender mainstreaming, and the report also called for each committee secretariat in the DGs for internal and external policies to include a specially trained official and to encourage networking among those officials in order to conduct regular exchanges on best practices. The committees should be provided with "appropriate tools" to gain a sound understanding of gender mainstreaming, such as indicators, data and statistics broken down by gender and the allocation of budgetary resources from a gender equality viewpoint. The implementation of gender mainstreaming should take account of the specific features of each parliamentary committee, and assessments should be carried out every two years on the basis of questionnaires submitted to the committees, including any shortcomings in the work of the committees and delegations as well as the progress made in implementing gender mainstreaming in each committee. Lastly, the report called for equality training to be arranged for all MEPs before the next parliamentary term.