Equality between women and men: roadmap 2006-2010

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Amalia SARTORI (EPP-ED, IT) in response to the Commission communication entitled 'A Roadmap for equality between women and men'. Although it welcomed the Commission's determination to pursue a long-term equal opportunities strategy, the committee pointed out that the Roadmap "does not include a single new legislative proposal" and that it "fails to specify the responsibilities of the Commission and the Member States as regards implementation and information to citizens, or the funds that will be allocated to implement its recommendations". The Commission was urged to draw up an overall framework for assessing the various policies and programmes involved, and MEPs stressed that the European Institute for Gender Equality should be set up quickly "so as to enable progress under the Roadmap to be constantly monitored".

The report also called on the Commission to treat gender equality not just as a priority for the EU but also "as an indispensable requirement of respect for the rights of the individual". Such an approach should involve strengthening measures to protect women and children against slavery, crimes in the name of honour or tradition, trafficking, and polygamy. The Commission was urged to carry out research into the underlying causes of gender-based violence and, provided that a legal basis is determined, to present a proposal for a directive on combating violence against women. The committee also called on Member States to withdraw the licences of doctors who practise genital mutilation.

In other recommendations, the report called for national measures to help women enter the labour market "on a footing of equal dignity and equal pay for equal work" and for the implementation of "concrete strategies to reinforce female entrepreneurship". The Commission was also urged to revise Council directive 75/117/EEC on the approximation of laws on the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women. And MEPs suggested that the Member States should appoint national officials ('Ms Lisbons') to take charge of gender equality for the purposes of implementing the Lisbon strategy.

The Commission was urged to encourage the creation of policies to reconcile family and working life, by ensuring, inter alia, that the cost of motherhood is borne by society as a whole, that care services and assistance are made more accessible and flexible, that fathers are actively encouraged to make use of available flexible working time options and take on household chores and family work (for example, by laying down an initial form of compulsory paternity leave) and by defining alternative methods of ensuring that women's pensions are covered where their professional careers have been too short or interrupted because of their increased family responsibilities.

The report also stressed that respect for women's rights must be "an essential condition for the EU's neighbourhood, foreign and development policies". The EU should "show greater commitment towards political dialogue with third countries and to giving financial support linked to development, with a view to promoting gender equality". Lastly the report called on the Commission to take "practical steps to promote the emancipation and economic and social integration of migrant women", including measures to foster language skills and understanding of the rights and duties deriving from the principles and laws applying in host countries (e.g. the prohibition of polygamy) and from the Union's core values.