Educational discrimination against women and girls

2006/2135(INI) - 13/11/2006

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Vera FLASAROVÁ (GUE/NGL, CZ) on educational discrimination against young women and girls. The report began by pointing out that "education and training of girls and women is a human right and an essential element for the full enjoyment of all other social, economic, cultural and political rights". It said that, in the European Union, women make less progress overall than men through the education system, including life-long learning, on account of diverse gender-related restrictions.

Among its recommendations, the committee suggested that policy in the area of equal access to education should involve an assessment of gender-differentiated statistics. It also recommended that Member States create and monitor national educational policies designed to enable all girls to complete compulsory schooling, and said that special policies were needed for national, ethnic and cultural minorities, especially the Roma minority, including pre-school and zero grade programmes, with a multicultural approach to combat double discrimination. The Council, Commission and Member States were also urged to take action to protect the rights of immigrant women and girls and combat the discrimination they face in their communities of origin by rejecting all forms of cultural and religious relativism which could violate women's fundamental rights.

MEPs said that Member States should devise more flexible adult education and lifelong learning programmes so that working women and mothers are able to continue their education in programmes that fit in with their schedules. They also stressed that the pay gap between women and men remains high: on average women earn 15% less than men, which is the result both of non-compliance with equal pay legislation and structural inequalities such as labour market segregation, differences in work patterns, access to education and training, biased evaluation and pay systems and stereotypes.

Lastly, the report urged Member States to encourage access by women to positions of responsibility and decision-making in public and private undertakings, with particular attention being paid to academic positions: it pointed out that, in education and research, women outnumber men as graduates (59%), yet their presence decreases consistently as they progress on the career ladder, from 43% of PhDs down to only 15% of full professors.