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Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

2006/2232(INI)

29.11.2006

OPINION

of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on combating HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in the neighbouring countries, 2006-2009
(2006/2232(INI))

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

- A. Whereas almost half the adults living with HIV and AIDS today are women; whereas, according to the UNAIDS, over the past two years, the number of women and girls infected with HIV has increased in every region of the world, with rates rising particularly rapidly in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America, whereas, according to the WHO, women are probably more susceptible than men to infection from HIV in any heterosexual encounter, due to biological factors,
- B. Whereas the patterns of epidemics are changing in several countries with sexually transmitted HIV cases comprising a growing share of new diagnoses; whereas increasing numbers of women are being infected unwittingly with the HIV virus in their private life through unsafe heterosexual contact and becoming carriers of the virus which it is then possible to transmit to their offspring,
- C. Whereas effective responses to AIDS must address the factors that continue to put women at risk and increase their vulnerability, such as violence against and trafficking in women, poverty and gender discrimination, sexual promiscuity or a failure to observe ethical principles,
 1. In view of the fact that there were nearly five million new cases of HIV infection worldwide in 2005 and in the same year three million people died of illnesses linked to AIDS, more than half a million (570 000) of whom were children¹, calls on institutions, governments and other bodies to make a concerted effort to ensure not only that children, adolescents and young people are included in the strategies to combat HIV/AIDS, but that they are the most important element in these strategies;
 2. Welcomes the Commission's intention actively to involve civil society in policy development, implementation and monitoring; considers that an important factor in relation to the practical work to combat HIV/AIDS and the credibility of that work, at national and European level, is the specific involvement of those who are HIV-positive and their organisations;
 3. Notes that the use of condoms reduces the risk of spreading HIV infection through sexual relations but that several studies show that clients in the sex trade prefer to buy sex without condoms; stresses, therefore, that all prostitution entails a higher risk of infection; considers that the legalisation of prostitution results in a general increase in both the legal and illegal sex trade, from which a greater risk of infection ensues; considers that the legalisation of prostitution does not result in safer sex either since it has proved very difficult in practice to control the use of condoms even in legal brothels; points out, moreover, that regulated health checks cover only those who sell sex, not the clients;

¹ amfAR (The Foundation for AIDS Research) "Gender-Based Violence and HIV among Women: Assessing the Evidence," Issue Brief No.3 June 2005

"Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the Crisis" A Joint Report by UNAIDS/UNFPA/UNIFEM 2004: 45

4. Calls on the Member States and the Commission, in view of the fact that women infected with HIV have often been subjected to violence by a male partner and that women run a greater risk of HIV infection, to take the measures to combat violence which are set out in its resolution of 2 February 2006 on the current situation in combating violence against women and any future action¹;
5. Calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure that appropriate and timely gender- and age-segregated surveillance data are gathered to support and develop more innovative and better targeted anti-drugs campaigns and health promotion campaigns for the prevention and control of the HIV epidemic in the EU and the neighbouring countries;
6. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and all parties involved, including non-governmental organisations and civil society, to help combat the stigmatisation of and discrimination against HIV/AIDS sufferers in Europe;
7. Urges the Commission to explore the possibilities and practical means and to use the results of clinical research to combat HIV/AIDS in the partner countries, the Western Balkans and Central Asia, following the procedures for external aid and respecting the directives for action as agreed in the strategy documents with the relevant countries and the indicative programmes;
8. Calls on the Commission to continue to regard research into HIV/AIDS as a priority in the seventh framework programme;
9. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the national health services and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, to strengthen and develop systems for monitoring, early warning and heightening public awareness in relation to the disease of HIV/AIDS in Europe and the partner countries;
10. Draws Member States' attention to the need to step up information campaigns and allocate more resources to combating the HIV/Aids virus among 15 to 25 year-olds in the European Union, given that the statistics published by UNAIDS in 2004 point to an alarming increase in the incidence of the disease in this age group;
11. Calls on the Member States to provide and strengthen targeted campaigns aimed at women and universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, HIV drugs to prevent the risk of mother-to-child transmission and antiretroviral therapy; stresses also that sexual and reproductive health and rights must be guaranteed as a strategic priority for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women;
12. Calls on the Member States, with the participation of the private sector, to invest in the development of affordable, user-friendly therapeutic and diagnostic facilities in order to broaden access to treatment;
13. Calls on the Member States and the health services to take measures relating to hygiene and information of healthcare personnel, the majority of whom are women, in order to prevent the transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus during blood transfusions in the course

¹ P6_TA(2006)0038.

of surgery and while nursing patients;

14. Emphasises the need to strengthen the synergies between HIV/AIDS prevention and programmes to promote sexual rights and health;
15. Calls on the Commission, within the framework of the new external financing instruments, to provide adequate funding to implement its policy on sexual and reproductive rights in general and on combating HIV/AIDS in particular;
16. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to adapt prevention and treatment programmes to the needs of all people faced with HIV/AIDS, particularly those whose language, culture and residency status might make it more difficult for them to obtain access to health services;
17. Calls on the Member States to promote greater use of the media and the most appropriate distribution channels to step up information for the population, especially adolescents and young people, on HIV infection, the ways it is transmitted, HIV testing and the kind of behaviour that fosters prevention;
18. Calls on the Commission to consider the possibility of including in the European Youth Portal a section devoted to the fight against AIDS, including data on the information, guidance and care resources concerning HIV/AIDS available in the Member States;
19. Calls on the European Union and the Member States, in view of the feminisation of HIV/AIDS, to continue investing in the development of microbicides to enable women to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS;
20. Urges the Member States to ensure universal access to education and the provision of instruction in the preconditions for personal growth, including an ability to live together in society and ethical principles, the provision of life-skills and sex education, including responsibility and respect for one's partner and action to promote increased safety in schools for all children, to increase protection against violence, abuse, rape, the dangers of sexual promiscuity, unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections including HIV, in the closest possible association with schools, other educational resources, the social services and services that combat juvenile delinquency;
21. Calls on the Member States to encourage, by way of policies and programmes, the promotion of the social integration and entry into the labour market of HIV/AIDS sufferers;
22. Calls on the Commission to hold firm to its commitment to increase funding for HIV/AIDS research and to ensure that HIV/AIDS research is gender balanced and includes aspects such as vaginal and rectal physiology and ecology and the biological and physiological nature of transmitting viruses;
23. Calls on the Member States to promote the gender - balanced involvement of both women and men in AIDS response; urges them to review national AIDS coordinating bodies and to ensure the meaningful representation of gender expertise, both women and men;
24. Welcomes the fact that Madrid will host the XI European Conference on AIDS from 24

to 27 October 2007, and hopes that during the event young researchers in particular will be called upon to submit research projects on this illness;

25. Calls on the Member States to give full support to women and men who are responsible for the daily care of people living with AIDS, and/or take care for their children and orphans; they should be provided with home based-care training and awareness raising on the prevention of getting HIV/AIDS and on the benefits of good treatment and care for the people living with AIDS;
26. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to enable all persons affected, and in particular pregnant women, to have access, under development aid programmes, to HIV drugs in order to reduce the incidence of transmission of the disease to unborn children;
27. Calls on the Member States to establish VCT sites, possibly at antenatal care centres as the starting point of all efforts to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS and STIs on pregnancy, both in terms of primary prevention of infection and care of the pregnant women and her child; access to safe abortion and counselling to ensure informed decision making and consent by the woman, should be part of the services;
28. Calls on the Member States and leadership from the private sector to develop, implement and strongly enforce policies prohibiting discrimination against HIV employees in the workforce or those who have HIV family members and to provide HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns for their employees.

PROCEDURE

Title	Combating HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in the neighbouring countries, 2006-2009
Procedure number	2006/2232(INI)
Committee responsible	ENVI
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	FEMM 28.9.2006
Enhanced cooperation – date announced in plenary	
Drafts(wo)man Date appointed	Zita Gurmai 24.1.2006
Previous drafts(wo)man	
Discussed in committee	4.10.2006 23.11.2006
Date adopted	23.11.2006
Result of final vote	+: 19 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Edit Bauer, Hiltrud Breyer, Věra Flasarová, Lissy Gröner, Zita Gurmai, Esther Herranz García, Livia Járóka, Pia Elda Locatelli, Angelika Niebler, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, Christa Prets, Eva-Britt Svensson, Britta Thomsen
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Anna Hedh, Mary Honeyball, Sophia in 't Veld, Zita Pleštinská, Heide Rühle, Bernadette Vergnaud
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	
Comments (available in one language only)	...