

Daphne programme : Evaluation and future perspectives

PUBLIC HEARING

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p.m.) Opening remarks by **Ms Anna**

KARAMANOU, Chairperson, Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I warmly welcome all of you to this mini hearing organised by our Rapporteur Ms Lissy Gröner, and I specially welcome our highly qualified experts, Prof. Dr. Van Hemeldonck, Honorary Member of this Parliament and former Chairperson of this Committee [welcome back to the Parliament!], Mr Patrick Trousson, in charge of the Daphne programme in the European Commission and Mrs Colette de Troy, co-ordinator of the European policy centre against violence against women from the European Women's Lobby.

To combat violence against women and children has been a priority of this Committee since long. Despite huge efforts that have been made by this Committee, there is still a great deal of work to be done.

Violence against women constitutes a crime and a violation of their physical, psychological and sexual integrity; it is a serious obstacle to achieve gender equality.

During the past century, women campaigned in Europe to have their basic human rights respected. Now, they have the right to vote and that of representation and yet, thousands of women are still unable to enjoy from the most basic rights of all: the right to life; the integrity of the person; and the right to human dignity. In the XXI century, women and children are victims of a modern form of slavery, trafficking for commercial and sexual exploitation. It is a denial

of the right to liberty and security, the right to freedom from torture, violence, cruelty or degrading treatment, the right to a home and a family, the right to education and employment, the right to health care, everything that makes for a life with dignity.

Although I will not go into a great detail, statistics confirm that this Committee will have to continue and increase its fight against violence against women in the future. Globally, women aged 15 to 44 are more likely to be maimed or die as a result of male violence than through cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or war together. Available data suggests that, across the Union, one woman in every four has been the victim of violence at some time in her life.

(Although exact figures are hard to establish, it is estimated by the International Office for Migration that 500.000 women are trafficked to Western Europe every year. Far from being a safe place, home is often the most dangerous place of all. UNICEF cites that conjugal violence causes more injuries and deaths amongst women aged between 45 and 65 than cancer. In Ireland in 1998, over half of all women murdered were killed by their partners or husbands. In Austria, 50 percent of divorces are filed on the grounds of violence against women. As for Finland, 22 per cent of women have suffered violence by their partners. A Dutch survey found that one in five women had been subjected to physical violence by a partner or ex-partner. The figure in Portugal was one in two.)

While poverty and lack of education are some root causes of violence against women, studies have shown that violence is a widespread phenomenon affecting the whole spectrum of society. Policy-makers must adopt measures not only to combat poverty and related social problems but also to tackle violence directly through initiatives like those that this Committee

has been undertaken over the past years. The 1999 European campaign against violence against women, reports, resolutions and declarations against all forms of violence against women and like the Daphne Programme.

(The Daphne programme (2000–2003) was adopted by a Decision of the Parliament and of the Council in 2000 with a budget of 20 million Euro for a four – year period. It supersedes the Daphne Initiative (1997–1999) that was set up by the Parliament in 1997 with a budget line of 3 million ECU, and for a period of four years.)

On 31 December 2003, the Daphne Programme will expire. The need for a programme to combat violence against women, children and young people is still present, as shown by the overwhelming response that Daphne I has received. Further to the request of the European Parliament resolution for a continuation of the Programme beyond 2003, the Commission adopted a new proposal on 4 February 2003 for a decision of the Parliament and of the Council to establish a second phase of the Daphne programme. It will cover a five – year period from 2004 to 2008 with a proposed financial appropriation of 41 million Euro.

Daphne II will continue the efforts to combat violence against women and children and we will continue to make every effort to put this very important problem on the top of the EU and any other policy makers' agenda.

On behalf of our Committee, I invite all of you to join us in our efforts and I am looking forward to an interesting debate today reflecting this issue. The outcome of this "mini-hearing" will be an important basis for the further deliberations we will undertake together with the Council in this very important programme.