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## **REPORT**

on the situation of Roma women in the European Union  
(2005/2164(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Rapporteur: Livia Járóka

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on the situation of Roma women in the European Union (2005/2164(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the fact that the Union and its institutions have on a number of occasions expressed concern or even alarm at the situation of Roma generally and Romani women in particular, in documents and actions such as the following:
  - its resolution of 28 April 2005 on the situation of the Roma in the European Union<sup>1</sup>,
  - the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia report “Romani Women and Access to Public Health Care: Breaking the Barriers”,
  - the Commission’s important and disturbing report on the Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union, including the particular attention paid by that report to gendered aspects of the situation of Roma in Europe<sup>2</sup>,
  - activities supported by the Commission, such as the Daphne programme’s study on the situation of Romani women in Spanish prisons,
- having regard to the fact that a number of Council of Europe bodies has also expressed dissatisfaction at the situation of Roma and Romani women in Europe and has urged policy- and law-makers to redress the unacceptable situation of Roma, including Romani women, in Europe, in documents such as:
  - the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1203/1993 on Gypsies in Europe, which notes *inter alia* the importance of education of Romani women,
  - the Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance General Policy recommendation no.3 on Combating Racism and Intolerance against Roma/Gypsies, which emphasises the double discrimination faced by Romani women<sup>3</sup>,
  - the recently-published Report by Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, “On the Human Rights Situation of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Europe<sup>4</sup>”,
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Institute for Gender Equality (COM(2005) 0081 – C6-0083/2005 - 2005/0017(COD)),
- having regard to the OSCE Action Plan to Improve the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, which emphasises the principle of taking full account of the

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 45 E, 23.2.2006, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Report “*The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*”, EC Directorate general for Employment and Social Affairs, Unit D3, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance "General Policy Recommendation No. 3 Combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies", Strasbourg, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Gil-Robles, Alvaro. Report “*On the Human Rights Situation of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Europe*”, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Strasbourg, 2006.

interests of Romani women in all matters and ensuring Romani women's participation in all aspects of life and the principle of “Roma to Roma”<sup>1</sup> cooperation,

- having regard to the Beijing Declaration for women’s rights, Article 32 of which provides that states are to “intensify efforts to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all women and girls who face multiple barriers to their empowerment and advancement”<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on General Discrimination XXVII on Discrimination against Roma - 57<sup>th</sup> Session 2000<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to documentation compiled by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) with partner organisations and provided to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (UN CEDAW) concerning Member States and accession and candidate countries, and having regard to the recommendations made by the UN CEDAW concerning the situation of Romani women and the need to take urgent measures to resolve the manifold problems faced by Romani women in Europe,
  - having regard to Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin<sup>4</sup>,
  - having regard to Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0148/2006),
- A. whereas, in the European Union, protecting human rights is of particular importance, and whereas, at present, Romani women constitute among the most threatened groups and individuals in the Member States – particularly the new Member States which acceded on 1 May 2004 – and accession and candidate countries,
- B. whereas there are indications that, as a result of patriarchal traditions, many women - including Romani women and girls - do not enjoy full respect for their freedom of choice in matters concerning the most fundamental decisions of their lives, and are thus thwarted in their ability to exercise their fundamental human rights,
- C. whereas EU law and policy-makers have adopted an extensive body of law and devised many policies designed to challenge the twin disadvantages of racial and gender

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<sup>1</sup> OSCE, *Action plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area*, PC.DEC/566, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Fourth World Conference on Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> "General Recommendation XXVII: Discrimination against Roma", United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Fifty-Seventh session, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p.22.

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p.16.

discrimination and their combined effects,

- D. whereas European policy- and law-makers have not yet succeeded in securing full and effective equality for Romani women, and their equal inclusion, with full dignity, in the societies of Europe,
- E. whereas Romani women face extreme levels of discrimination, including multiple or compound discrimination, which is fuelled by very widespread stereotypes known as anti-gypsism,
- F. whereas surveys show that the life expectancy of Romani women is, in some geographical areas, shorter than that of other women,
- G. whereas there is ample documentation indicating that Romani women are particularly excluded from health care and often only have access to health care in the case of an extreme emergency and/or childbirth,
- H. whereas Romani women have, in recent years, been victims of extreme human rights abuses in Europe and in particular of attacks on their physical integrity, including coercive sterilisation; whereas, although some Member States have provided redress for such abuse, others have yet to do so,
- I. whereas the gap in the level of education between non-Romani women and Romani women is unacceptably large;<sup>1</sup> whereas very many Romani girls fail to complete primary education<sup>2</sup>,
- J. whereas racial segregation in schools and biased attitudes among teachers and administrators contributes to the low level of expectations of Romani parents for their daughters in particular,
- K. whereas the unemployment rate among adult Romani women is, in many places, many times higher than that of the rest of the adult female population,
- L. whereas a significant proportion of Romani women throughout Europe currently live in housing that is a threat to their health, and whereas in many places Romani women live under constant threat of forced eviction,
- M. whereas Romani women are frequently among victims of trafficking in Europe,
- N. whereas a lawsuit was recently brought before the European Court of Human Rights against the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), alleging extreme harm to a number of persons, including Romani women and girls<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> In Romania, 3% of Romani women have reportedly completed secondary school, as opposed to 63% of women in general (Open Society Institute, Research on Selected Roma Education Programs in Central and Eastern Europe, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Report "*Avoiding Dependency trap- the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe*", UNDP, Bratislava 2002.

<sup>3</sup> See European Roma Rights Centre press release, "Victims of Kosovo Poisoning Bring Lawsuit at European Court of Human Rights", 20 February 2006, at: [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org).

1. Welcomes the proposal to establish an EU Institute for Gender Equality and recommends the creation in that structure of a unit dealing with Romani women in the European Union;
2. Urges public authorities throughout the Union to promptly investigate allegations of extreme human rights abuses against Romani women, to swiftly punish perpetrators, and to provide adequate compensation to victims and, as such, urges the Member States to regard measures intended to provide better protection for women's reproductive and sexual health, to prevent and outlaw coercive sterilisation and to promote family planning, alternative arrangements to early marriages and sex education as among their highest priorities, to take proactive measures to eliminate racially segregated maternity wards, to ensure that programmes are developed to provide services to Romani victims of domestic violence, to exercise particular vigilance with respect to the trafficking of Romani women, and urges the Commission to support governmental and civil society initiatives designed to tackle these problems while securing the fundamental human rights of the victims;
3. Urges the Member States to review the implementation of all policies to ensure that Romani women are involved in the preparation, planning and implementation of these processes;
4. Urges the Member States to adopt minimum standards within the framework of the Open Method of Coordination with the aim of taking a range of measures to ensure that women and girls have access on equal terms to quality education for all, including: adopting positive laws requiring school desegregation and setting out the specifics of plans to end the separate, substandard education of Romani children;
5. Insists that Romani children must be taught to read and write and that this must be a priority for families and for the schools in which such children are educated;
6. Urges the Member States to improve Romani housing by providing recognition under domestic law of a right to adequate housing, remedying the current dearth of protection available to individuals under domestic law against forced eviction, adopting in consultation with representatives of affected communities comprehensive plans for financing the improvement of living and housing conditions in districts which have a sizeable Romani population, ordering local authorities to promptly provide adequate potable water, electricity, waste removal, public transport and roads;
7. Urges the Member States to promote socially mixed housing;
8. Calls upon the Member States to make sites available for non-sedentary Roma which will enable them to enjoy a satisfactory standard of comfort and hygiene;
9. Demands adequate relocation to safer housing especially for Romani women refugees in the highly lead-contaminated land of the Mitrovica region of Kosovo; draws attention to the temporary and newly renovated location of the French KFOR Camp Osterode which is provided as an interim solution; calls on the Council, the Commission and the Member States to provide sufficient financial resources for a relocation to the place of origin; emphasises the need to enforce human rights while continuing the Stabilisation

and Association Process;

10. Urges the Member States to ensure that all Romani women have access to primary, emergency and preventive health care, to develop and implement policies to ensure that even the most excluded communities have full access to the health care system, and the introduction of anti-bias training for health-care workers;
11. Urges governments to ensure that equal treatment and equal opportunities are an integral part of employment and social-inclusion policies, to tackle the very high unemployment rates among Romani women, and in particular to address the serious barriers posed by direct discrimination in hiring procedures;
12. Urges the adoption of the concept of “positive obligations”, whereby state and non-state entities are required by law to ensure that Romani women are represented proportionate to their presence in the local population;
13. Urges governments to examine barriers to self-employment by Romani women, and to create programmes to enable accessible, fast, and inexpensive registration for Romani women entrepreneurs and self-employed persons, to establish avenues for accessible credit – including micro-credit – for the financing of undertakings by Romani women, and urges the Commission to support these activities through relevant funding mechanisms;
14. Recommends that the Member States and the Commission promote social entrepreneurship models specifically targeting Romani women;
15. Calls upon the Commission and Parliament, in the context of the various funds, to treat as a horizontal objective capacity-building and empowerment of Romani women individuals and organisations in education, employment, leadership and political participation;
16. Urges the Commission to support, through its many relevant financial mechanisms, activities targeting Romani women in particular, and to review rules for the allocation of all funding, to ensure that particular provision is made for the inclusion of Romani women and urges the Member States to pursue similar practices at the level of national, regional and local institutions;
17. Recommends that the Commission launch legal proceedings and ultimately levy dissuasive fines against any Member States that have not yet transposed the anti-discrimination Directives<sup>1</sup> into domestic law and/or fully implemented them in practice as regards Romani women, and that it monitor the enforcement of any judgments passed by the European Court of Justice in cases of inadequate compliance;
18. Urges the EU institutions to take as a key criterion for evaluating states of readiness for

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<sup>1</sup> Including the Directives adopted pursuant to the amended TEC Article 13 following the Treaty of Amsterdam, as well as related Directives specifying the scope and dimension of the ban on discrimination against women under EU law.

accession to the European Union the situation of Romani women in candidate countries, including the situation of Romani women in those candidate countries not traditionally or readily associated with Roma issues;

19. Recommends that Member States take full advantage of policy processes such as the open method of coordination to develop and implement policies ensuring full equality in practice of Romani women;
20. Urges the Union institutions to take the lead in encouraging governments to collect and publish data disaggregated by sex and ethnicity on the situation of Romani men and women, in order to measure progress in education, housing, employment, health care and other sectors; considers that the EU should urge governments to raise awareness in state administrations and among the general public of the fact that ethnic data can be gathered without threatening individual identification, and should encourage governments to use any existing, safe and innovative methodologies;
21. Recalls that the horizontal approach successfully makes it possible each year to provide support for the organisation of the annual forum for Romani women living in the European Union;
22. Urges the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia to initiate a series of studies on the role of the media in fostering anti-gypsyism, and in particular on the promotion of damaging stereotypes of Romani women;
23. Calls urgently for close consultation of Romani women in the drawing up of any programme and any project undertaken by EU institutions and/or by the Member States which may affect them, and for positive action to be taken for their benefit;
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and accession and candidate countries.



## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

While preparing the draft of my report, I have had discussions with both public and private parties in the European Union. These contacts included:

- an exchange of views with Roma Women's Initiative.
  
- As a woman of Roma origin, I have experienced first hand much of the same discrimination that faces Romani women across Europe.
  
- As an anthropologist, I have studied the situation of Romani women by visiting Romani communities and personally observing their experiences. As an MEP, last year, when I visited Greece and Macedonia, I witnessed more of the victimization of Romani women first hand.
  
- a public hearing on the issue of Roma women in the European Parliament with the participation of representatives from Roma women NGOs,
  
- an exchange of views with Vladimir Spidla, the European Commissioner for Employment and Gender Equality, on the 27th of September, 2004, on the forced sterilization cases experienced by Roma women,

The rapporteur regrets that the Report of the Project: The Economic and Social Situation of Roma Women (RomWom) by the Berlin Institute for Comparative Social Research could not be used in this report since the conclusions of the RomWom report were not fully completed by the completion of this report.

This report, as part of a series on poverty and social exclusion as well as on equal opportunities, is the first, which emphasizes the complex, multiple discrimination faced by Romani women in the member states of European Union. Romani women throughout Europe face discrimination not only because of their gender, but also on account of the ethnic group to which they belong due to widespread anti-Gypsyism. In the same time the diversity of Romani population across EU gives a range of problems faced by Romani women. The extreme complexity of the issue to be analysed results from this variety of situations<sup>1</sup>.

Therefore, some criteria have to be borne in mind when analysing the problems faced by Romani women: the group of Roma to which women belong, their place of living – urban or rural, their marital status: married and single women (within the latter category, we also have the group of the single mothers), the social group to which they belong, the specificities of the culture of the majority population, their religion.

However the differences, a set of problems is to be encountered by majority of them such as: discrimination in education – both from school and community-, employment, and access to

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<sup>1</sup> In the EC Report “*The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*” it is used the terminology Roma, Gypsy, Travellers in order to cover the diversity of groups.

health care. Although there has been an increased recognition of the discrimination that Romani population faces, very little has been improved<sup>1</sup>. The multiple discrimination and social exclusion of Romani women exacerbates the cycle of poverty into which many of them are born, and deprives them of their human dignity.

Nevertheless, there is an increased effort to address the diversity of European populations but regarding Romani women we find that the gender equality policies start from a “given” (correct for middle class European), which is faraway to be achieved by Romani women and other marginalized and socially excluded women. There is a cry of minority and in special Romani women to find themselves in the policies and actions of the member states as well as European Union’s Institutions when addressing both gender equality and racial and ethnic discrimination<sup>2</sup>.

Like their male counterparts, many Romani girls are either excluded completely from education systems or they are placed into segregated schools or classes - often "special classes" - which do not meet their educational needs. This racial segregation combined with biased attitudes of teachers contributes to feelings of inferiority among the children. However, female Romani students encounter an additional obstacle to their education, as they are often forced to leave school at an extremely young age to help care for younger siblings or to carry out other household responsibilities. Pressure to marry early also detracts from Roma girls' chances of completing their education.<sup>3</sup> Since education is one of the most important tools for escaping from poverty, the dual discrimination faced by Romani women in the field of education means that they will have a particularly difficult time escaping poverty.

Roma women face prejudice in hiring, promotion and salary. Moreover, many Roma women remain entirely excluded from the formal economy, constrained by limited educational opportunities, inadequate housing, and poor healthcare, traditional gender roles and general marginalization from the majority communities. The unemployment rate among adult Romani women is in some places many times higher than that of the majority population.

Throughout the Union, both the Romani population in general and women receive lower wages than racial majority populations and men.

Romani women also face discrimination in terms of accessing health care.<sup>4</sup> In various European countries, Roma are refused healthcare by general practitioners on the grounds that they are “someone else’s responsibility.” Facilities are often spatially segregated on the basis that Romani women are “dirty,” “thieves,” and “anti-social.” There is documentation suggesting that Romani women often only have access to health care in the case of an extreme emergency, and sometimes not even in that case. Romani women are therefore often without

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<sup>1</sup> See the same report pg 1, Executive Summary.

<sup>2</sup> See “Romani Women in the European Union: Realities and Challenges” Nicoleta Bitu, OSI Network Women Program, Romani Women Initiative, presentation at the Hearing of the EP Femm committee, Situation of Roma women in the EU, 23 November 2005.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, *A Place at the Policy Table*, report on the Romani women's Forum of the Open Society Institute, 29 June 2003.

<sup>4</sup> European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. *Breaking the Barriers - Romani Women and Access to Public Health Care* (2003).

access to primary or preventative health care. The result is that the life expectancy of Romani women in some places is reportedly shorter by 10 years than that of majority women, and child mortality rates are much higher.

In terms of reproductive rights there have been in the last year reported cases of sterilization in two member countries. Despite evidence of the facts, government fails to address the reparation of victims in a consistent manner.

Many Romani women live in inadequate housing, often in unsafe and unhealthy conditions. Forced eviction is also a widespread problem in Romani communities.

Romani women often live within traditional patriarchal communities, which can contribute to the violence against them and denies them basic freedoms of choice. Romani women are also often victims of trafficking throughout Europe. A lawsuit has just recently been brought to UNMIK, alleging extreme harms to multiple parties, including Romani women.

Adding to the existing biased attitudes toward Roma people, the mass media in the EU is not contributing at all to diminishing these attitudes. It's known now that the carriers of the stereotyped image of Roma are the women and children, whose images are often used in press and text books.<sup>1</sup>

Although it is widely recognized that there exists a problem of discrimination and marginalization of Romani women throughout various sectors of society, it is difficult to prove due to the lack of disaggregated data on the basis of sex and ethnicity. It is necessary for governments to collect data while respecting the dignity and privacy of minorities in order to solve the problems faced by Romani women.

While there are Romani women who have become notable public figures, most Romani women are not included in the decision-making that affects their lives. European and national policies must be reformulated to better address the discrimination that Romani women face. Within gender mainstreaming policies in particular, there must be a new recognition of the fact that many women also face an added dimension to their discrimination on the basis of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds. It is only recently that the gender aspect has been added to the consideration of racial discrimination against the Roma,<sup>2</sup> but it is clear that both the gender and the racial dimensions must be taken into equal consideration in the formulation of an effective policy to advance the situation of Romani women in Europe.

It is clear that solving the problems facing Roma women can not be addressed without an efficient legal framework at both the EU level and Member State level. At the EU level, the Racial Equality Directive ( 2000/43/EC) and the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC) are not always comprehensive and often vague. For example, on the topic of multiple discrimination, which affects Romani women, the language used in EU legislation is ambiguous. It also does not address discrimination based on nationality, which is used as an

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<sup>1</sup> *"Roma women Rights are Rights to Dignity, Diversity and equal participation"* I presentation to the EP Femm Committee Hearing on Romani women in EU, Miranda Vuolasranta, November 2005

<sup>2</sup> Kocze, Angela. "Double Discrimination Face by Romani Women in Europe." Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities, meeting on 26 November 2003.

excuse for continued discrimination of Roma.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, many Member States still have not completely implemented these Directives, and this creates major problems for groups historically marginalized and discriminated against, such as the Roma.<sup>2</sup>

At the Member State level, there is a need for an efficient anti-discrimination legislative framework focusing on the mainstreaming of Romani needs and interests into general policymaking while taking into account the key elements of Roma identities.

Mainstreaming in policymaking is only implemented when it is determined that future laws and policies do not sustain discrimination against Roma, when laws and policies that do create discrimination are eliminated, and when special provisions are made to account for key elements of Romani identities. Despite the fact that many Member States have implemented anti-discrimination policy on paper, the above mentioned criteria are missing from implementation. This is one reason why Roma women still face double discrimination on the grounds of gender and ethnicity. In the fields of education and employment especially, positive measures should be introduced which would aim to specifically improve the situation of Roma women in these two areas. Moreover we should enhance discussion and gender policy creation which would address the needs of Romani women as more than the traditional role of mother and care-taker.

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<sup>1</sup> European Roma Information Office. Answers to the Green Paper. 2004.

<sup>2</sup> EUMC. "Migrants, minorities and legislation: Documenting legal measures and remedies against discrimination in 15 Member States of the European Union", p 117, 118. December 2004.

## PROCEDURE

|                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Title</b>                                                            | The situation of Roma women in the European Union                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Procedure number</b>                                                 | (2005/2164(INI))                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Committee responsible</b><br>Date authorisation announced in plenary | FEMM<br>29.9.2005                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Committee(s) asked for opinion(s)</b><br>Date announced in plenary   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Not delivering opinion(s)</b><br>Date of decision                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Enhanced cooperation</b><br>Date announced in plenary                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Rapporteur(s)</b><br>Date appointed                                  | Lívía Járóka<br>15.9.2005                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Previous rapporteur(s)</b>                                           | Lívía Járóka                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Discussed in committee</b>                                           | 21.3.2006 25.4.2006                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Date adopted</b>                                                     | 25.4.2006                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                                             | + 23<br>- 0<br>0 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>                               | Edit Bauer, Hiltrud Breyer, Maria Carlshamre, Věra Flasarová, Lissy Gröner, Zita Gurmai, María Esther Herranz García, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Astrid Lulling, Angelika Niebler, Siiri Oviir, Doris Pack, Christa Prets, Teresa Riera Madurell, Amalia Sartori, Eva-Britt Svensson, Anne Van Lancker, Anna Záborská |
| <b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>                         | Véronique De Keyser, Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, Anna Hedh, Zita Pleštinská                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>       | Joel Hasse Ferreira                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Date tabled</b>                                                      | 27.4.2006                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Comments</b><br>(available in one language only)                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |