

# Equality between women and men - 2007

2007/2065(INI) - 27/09/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Piia-Noora **KAUPPI** (EPP-ED, FI) on the Commission report on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2007. The resolution took as its starting point the fourth annual Commission report on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in policy areas. Two major initiatives in 2006 had a bearing on gender equality in the EU: the Commission's adoption of the Roadmap for equality between women and men for 2006-2010, and the adoption of the Pact for Gender Equality. The report welcomed the efforts of the Commission to intensify its actions promoting equality, but stressed that further efforts and further measures to overcome outdated decision-making and behavioural patterns, particularly in the administrative sector, were required in order to improve gender mainstreaming across policy areas. As well as dealing with employment issues such as the gender pay gap and insecurity in the job market, the report called for specific measures to combat inequalities caused by interrupted patterns of employment resulting from maternity leave and leave to take care of dependants. It also urged Member States to mutualise the cost of maternity leave allowance in order to ensure that women no longer represent a more costly source of labour than men.

Parliament began by pointing out that gender mainstreaming at EU level is being conducted as a dual strategy seeking to ensure, on the one hand, equality for men and women in all policy areas and, on the other, targeted measures to curb discrimination against women. It called on the Commission to propose, in addition to the gender mainstreaming approach, a series of specific measures, including awareness-raising campaigns, the exchange of best practices, dialogues with citizens and public-private partnership initiatives. It also insisted on the need to have a clear and permanent link between the annual reports on equality and the priorities defined in the Roadmap in order to implement an efficient cycle of planning, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality policies. Member States were asked to put forward specific measures to combat inequalities between women and men caused by interrupted patterns of employment resulting in particular from maternity leave or leave to care for dependants and to reduce their negative effects on careers, wages and pension entitlements.

Parliament asked the Commission to do the following:

- carry out a study on how Member States implement Community legislation in the area of equality and take appropriate action in the event of non-transposition or infringement;
- find appropriate means to combat the gender segregation of the labour market and to facilitate women's entry into non-traditional sectors;
- develop gender analysis and mainstreaming on the impact of pension reforms on women's lives in the EU with the objectives of individualising pensions rights and social security and tax systems;
- disseminate best practices with regard to working environment policies which allow for an effective work-life balance and with regard to measures fostering greater involvement by men in family life;
- take measures to reduce the gender pay gap and promote parental leave for men and paternity leave;
- cooperate with Member States to collect relevant data and to enforce measures that could prevent human trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour;
- focus on instruments and mechanisms for preventing the exploitation of migrant workers.

The report noted that the reconciliation of work, private and family life was an important issue and one of the keys to increasing employment and reducing the burden of demographic ageing. All policies in this area must be based on the principle of free personal choice and be geared to the various stages in life.

Parliament went on to note that globalisation has been a positive force, empowering women all over the world to reach their potential, namely through improved access to education and healthcare. However, one effect of increased globalisation is the feminisation of poverty. Parliament asked the Commission to ensure that all future trade agreements, for example those within the framework of the WTO, are also scrutinised in the light of gender issues.

The report also underlined the need to address the major democratic deficit relating to women's under-representation in political decision-making. Member States must investigate the factors that prevent women from participating fully in the political arena and from gaining senior management roles in all levels of public administration. Measures must be taken to remedy such situations.

Specific attention should be paid to the situation of women belonging to ethnic minorities and of women immigrants. Parliament recommended the adoption of national integrated action plans in order to tackle multiple discrimination, especially where different bodies deal with discrimination issues in a particular Member State.

It asked Member States to do the following:

- develop specific gender equality objectives and targets within the EU Social Inclusion Strategy in order to combat poverty and social exclusion, including a set of policy actions to support non-traditional and one-parent families, and specific policy actions in support of groups of women who are at a high risk of poverty and social exclusion such as migrants, refugees, ethnic minority women, older women and disabled women;
- mutualise the costs of maternity and parental leave allowances in order to ensure that women no longer represent a more costly source of labour than men;
- combat, in conjunction with both sides of industry, discrimination against pregnant women on the labour market and to take all necessary steps to ensure a high level of protection for mothers. The Commission needs to make a more detailed assessment of compliance with Community law in this area and determine whether it needs to be revised.

Parliament insisted on the need to focus policies on combating gender stereotypes in education from an early age, eliminating them from school curricula and textbooks, providing awareness training to teachers and students and encouraging boys and girls to embrace non-traditional educational paths. It felt that the EU labour market in most EU countries does not adequately reflect higher average educational levels and better academic performance of women. Key competences, such as an entrepreneurial attitude and a scientific and technological approach should be reinforced, especially among women.

Parliament observed the importance of having adequate comparable statistics and, in this context, deplored the invisibility of certain categories of person in European statistics, for example partners working on family farms, who, if they are women, are generally recorded as "housewives". It called on Eurostat to include this category of person in its statistics in order to raise the profile of women's work.

Lastly, the report drew attention to the high levels of poverty and degrees of isolation affecting women in some rural areas, and pointed to the need for effective measures to guarantee equal opportunities for women, an aim which should be central to all the measures provided for under the common agricultural policy and to other relevant Community policies.