Equality between women and men - 2008

2008/2047(INI) - 03/09/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 563 votes to 65, with 61 abstentions, a resolution on equality between women and men.

The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Iratxe **GARCÍA PÉREZ** (PES, ES) on behalf of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

The Parliament welcomes the Commission's 2008 report on equality between women and men and reiterates the two-fold nature of policy on equal opportunities for women and men at EU level, which, on the one hand ensures equality between women and men in all policy areas (gender mainstreaming) and, on the other hand, puts in place targeted measures to curb discrimination against women, including awareness-raising campaigns, the exchange of best practice, dialogue with citizens and public-private partnership initiatives.

The Parliament outlines areas where improvements should be made:

Combating violence against women: the Parliament stresses the importance of combating violence against women and calls on the Member States and the Commission, therefore, to undertake concerted action in this field. It calls on the Commission to consider the possibility of new measures in this area and to fight firmly against organised crime and trafficking networks. The plenary calls, in particular, for the strengthening of legislative, administrative, educational, social and cultural measures that discourage demand for prostitution and invites the Member States to urgently ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Women in the decision-making process: reaffirming its criticism that overall participation of women in decision making is insufficient, the Parliament calls on the Commission, the Member States and political parties to consider action to improve the situation, particularly the use of **electoral quotas** to increase the participation of women at relevant levels in the decision-making process. The same action should be taken in civil society and in the involvement of women in NGOs and trade unions.

Gender mainstreaming: the Parliament calls on the Commission and the Member States to take the necessary measures to implement gender mainstreaming in all social, employment and social security policies, as well as in the flexicurity strategy, and to combat all forms of discrimination.

Same work, same pay: the Parliament is concerned about the lack of progress as regards the gender pay gap between women and men. It urges the Union, therefore, to establish, in cooperation with the social partners, new measures to improve the situation. The Parliament supports the suggestion of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities to render existing European legislation on the subject more stringent by inserting a requirement for employers to conduct wage audits and draw up action plans in order to close the pay gap. It calls for concerted action in this area, especially in the context of the new cycle of the European Strategy for Growth and Jobs. It recommends, in particular, the creation of an 'International Equal Pay Day', to be celebrated on 22 February each year. Furthermore, the Parliament calls on Member States to support the implementation of national measures aimed at applying equivalent rules as regards pension and social security regimes. At the same time, the Parliament is concerned about the slow development of women's careers compared to men in the labour market. It therefore calls on the Member States to take effective action designed to enforce the rules on welfare and employment, thereby ensuring

that women earn decent wages and are entitled to health and safety at work, to social protection and to trade-union freedom. The plenary also calls for an assessment of the observance of the principle of equality, particularly as regards legal entitlements and pension and social security regimes.

Women and science: the Parliament proposes that the Commission consider adopting measures to encourage women to study scientific and technological subjects and to take further measures to improve women's participation in the labour market, especially in sectors in which they are still under-represented (high-technology, research, science and engineering), through Community funds and programmes.

Female spouses of self-employed workers: the Parliament calls on the Commission and the Member States to give consideration to the situation of spouses helping in handicrafts, trade, agriculture, fisheries and small family businesses, from the gender equality perspective, and calls on the Commission, as a matter of urgency, to amend Directive 86/613/EEC on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity (including agriculture) in a self-employed capacity. Other initiatives are called for to promote female entrepreneurship in the industrial sector, to facilitate maternity for self-employed women etc. At the same time, the Parliament invites the Commission and the Member States to take particular note of the situation of the increasing numbers of workers who are formally self-employed, but can in reality be categorised as 'economically dependent workers'.

Vulnerable groups of women: the Parliament calls for priority to be given to certain vulnerable groups of women, such as disabled women, elderly women, minority and immigrant women and women prisoners, and to develop targeted measures to meet their needs. In addition, measures have also been called for to improve the situation of women in precarious jobs. The Parliament calls, in particular, for measures to combat the situation of poor female workers and those at risk of exclusion (especially elderly women and single mothers). Measures should also be taken to promote immigrant women's access to education and employment.

Work-life balance: several initiatives have been called for to improve the work-life balance, recalling that any policy in this area must be based on the principle of free personal choice and adapted to different life cycles. Among these initiatives, the Parliament specifies actions to:

- improve the legislative and non-legislative frameworks for reconciling professional, family and private lives (relating to maternity leave and its inclusion in aggregate working time and to parental leave, for example);
- strengthen measures that facilitate paternity or parental leave;
- combat inequalities between women and men caused by interrupted patterns of employment resulting in particular from maternity leave or leave to care for dependants;
- disseminate best practice regarding an effective work-life balance and greater involvement of men in family life;
- strengthen all relevant national measures to improve the availability, quality and accessibility of childcare services and care services for dependent persons;
- implement flexible family policy measures in firms to make it easier for employees to return to work after a career break.

Targeted measures are also called for to promote the participation of women in sport.

Better implementation tools to measure the progress of equality: the Parliament calls on the Member States and the local authorities to ensure the effective use of existing tools and indicators to obtain statistics which are reliable, comparable and available when needed on the implementation of the gender dimension. It calls on the Commission and the European Institute for Gender Equality, to include facts and statistics from candidate and potential candidate countries in future annual reports on equality between women and men to gain an overview of the situation of women in future Commission reports.

Note that the recommendations on the elimination of gender stereotypes in the media were deleted in plenary.