Assessment of the results of the 2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality between women and men and forward looking recommendations

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The European Parliament adopted by 316 votes to 264, with 31 abstentions, a resolution on the assessment of the results of the 2006-2010 Roadmap for Equality between women and men, and forward-looking recommendations.

Assessment of the 2006-2010 Roadmap: Parliament notes that in the field of equal economic independence for women and men: (i) the employment rate among women has reached almost 60%, as set by the Lisbon employment targets: (ii) the Commission has made legislative proposals aimed at enhancing the reconciliation of work and private and family life; (iii) the integration of gender equality as a priority into Community education and training programmes, with the aim of reducing stereotypes in society.

However, progress still needs to be made as regards:

- the lack of binding measures addressing the persistent gender pay gap,
- the fact that paternity, adoption and filial leave have not been addressed in EU legislation;
- the fact that only a minority of Member States have achieved the Barcelona objectives of providing access to affordable and quality childcare;
- the need for urgent measures to improve the situation of women in precarious working conditions, in particular migrant and ethnic minority women, who are becoming even more vulnerable in the context of the economic and social crisis;
- the under-representation of women in political and economic decision-making positions in the majority of Member States;
- the need for legislative measures at European level to eradicate gender-based violence;
- the fact that persistent gender stereotypes still serve as a basis for many inequalities.

In addition, Members call for the strengthening of gender mainstreaming in the EU's development, external and external trade policies to be continued.

At institutional level: Parliament proposes that the EU's new gender equality strategy constitute an agenda for action and a **political commitment** based on the Beijing Platform for Action and its achievements, bearing in mind that the human rights of women and girls form an inalienable, indivisible and integral part of universal human rights. It points out that it is still essential to pursue the current roadmap's six priority areas of action. It proposes that **European funding should be granted for the new strategy** for equality between women and men in order to facilitate its execution at European level.

The resolution maintains that the Council, **after consulting Parliament**, has to adopt the Commission's proposed new gender equality strategy so as to give it greater political weight and provide fresh impetus for gender equality policy. It proposes that the Council, the Commission, and Parliament hold an annual tripartite meeting to review progress on the EU gender equality strategy.

Further proposals have been made at **international level**:

- the need for structured dialogue with civil society in order to ensure the principle of equality between women and men;
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- the proposal to hold an annual tripartite meeting to review progress on the EU gender equality strategy. Parliament maintains that that a conference on gender equality, attended by women's organisations, other organisations working for gender equality such as LGBT organisations, trade unions from the Member States, Members of the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the national parliaments, should be held annually, focusing on a predetermined theme each year;
- the Commission should start practising the 'gender mainstreaming' method in the preparation of all its proposals;
- the High Representative should ensure **gender balance in the establishment of the European External Action Service** (EEAS) and draw up an action plan with a view to pursuing gender balance in the EU delegations, including at the highest level;
- ensure that a gender perspective is incorporated into all development cooperation policies;
- adopt sectoral measures of a trend-setting nature to support education and training courses aimed at integrating women, including young women, into the labour market;
- the importance of devising quantity and quality indicators and gender-based statistics which are reliable, comparable and available when needed, to be used in monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all policies;
- apply an integrated approach to gender equality while continuing to take specific action, including legislative measures, as regards budget headings and allocations;
- take the necessary steps to mainstream the gender perspective into all Community policies and to review existing legislation so as to ensure that gender equality is correctly applied and that positive discrimination measures can be applied where necessary;
- the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) Regulation should be amended to enable, as happens with the European Social Fund (ESF), proactive measures to be taken in support of women in the 2014-2020 programming period;
- to undertake a review of policies on work-life balance with a view to ensuring that the cost of parenthood is not borne by the employer, but by the community, so as to eradicate discriminatory behaviour in businesses and contribute to our demographic future;
- to adopt affirmative measures for the benefit of women and men in order to facilitate their return to employment after a period of carrying out family duties;
- to provide appropriate social benefits for women and men who take care of elderly, sick or disabled relatives, and for elderly women, who receive particularly small pensions.

Parliament stresses the need to prevent the current financial and economic crisis, and future economic issues, from endangering what has been achieved so far in the field of gender equality, and to **avoid the recession being used**, as is already the case in some Member States, **as an argument for scaling back gender equality measures**, as in the long term this would hinder growth in employment figures, economic growth in the EU, higher tax revenue, rising birth rates and the promotion of gender equality.

Policy areas – aims: Parliament takes the view that one priority should be to **fight poverty** by reforming the macroeconomic, monetary, social and labour market policies that are its root causes, with a view to guaranteeing economic and social justice for women, by reconsidering the methods used to determine the poverty rate and by pursuing strategies to promote **fair distribution of income,** guarantee a minimum income and decent wages and pensions, create more high-quality jobs coupled with rights for women, enable women and girls to benefit from public services of a high standard, and improve welfare provision and neighbourhood services, including crèches, nursery schools, kindergartens.

Parliament calls on the Member States to analyse the effects of measures to combat the **crisis on gender equality** and calls on the Commission to eliminate gaps in the areas covered in order to ensure the same level of legal protection against gender-based discrimination as against discrimination on the basis of race, and to improve legal protection and access to legal remedies for victims of multiple discrimination. Measures need to be taken as a matter of urgency to combat **wage discrimination**, whether by revising the existing directive, by drawing up phased industry-wide plans with clear-cut goals – such as narrowing

the pay gap to **0-5% by 2020**. Members take the view that transparent wage composition should be standard practice with a view to strengthening the negotiating position of women workers.

Although Members welcome the fact that female employment in the EU is close to the target of 60% by 2010, they are adamant that a more ambitious figure of **75% by 2020** now needs to be set. They call for the position of especially vulnerable groups to be strengthened , such as an independent status for migrant women faced with domestic violence, individualised entitlements to pensions and other benefits for women with no or little labour market participation and a campaign to raise awareness of discrimination against transgender people and improve their access to legal remedies.

The resolution deplores the fact that women are **under-represented in decision-making** in both the business world and democratic processes, and insists that more ambitious measures are needed to boost the number of women sitting on boards of directors of companies and in local, regional, national and European public institutions.

More specific measures are called which aim to:

- create better working conditions for women;
- adopt flexible organisational models based on target-oriented work and not linked to physical presence;
- encourage incentives for the development and implementation at enterprise level of affirmative action programmes and human resource policies aimed at promoting gender equality;
- improve the availability, quality and accessibility of childcare and care services for dependent persons;
- ensure that affordable quality care services are available for at least 50% of children under three years of age, and to **make education available to all children between the age of three and the mandatory school age**;
- pursue a more active policy to prevent violence against women;
- maintain that every attention should be brought to bear on the situation of women working with their spouses in agriculture, craft industries, commerce or fisheries, and of small family businesses;
- review the taxation and social protection systems in order to individualise rights, guarantee equal pension rights and remove incentives that adversely affect women's labour market and social participation, such as **joint taxation** and grants for caring for dependants that are linked to women being inactive on the job market;
- stressing the importance of preventive measures to ensure women's sexual and reproductive health;
- stressing the need to make gender reassignment procedures accessible for transgender persons, and to ensure that they are reimbursed by public health insurance schemes;
- improve the arrangements by which women's organisations and civil society in general collaborate with and take part in gender perspective integration processes.

The resolution emphasises that the new EU gender equality strategy and accompanying institutional mechanisms must be closely connected to the global agenda for women's rights. It notes that this includes linking up with and supporting the new UN gender equality entity, which should combine policy and operational activities. Plenary adds that the new EU gender equality strategy and accompanying institutional mechanisms should explicitly cover gender identity and address combating discrimination arising from gender reassignment.

To conclude, Parliament recalls their recent resolutions on preventing trafficking in human beings and on equality between women and men in the EU and call on the European institutions and the Member States to put greater emphasis on combating multiple discrimination, poverty and social exclusion and health inequalities.