Progress on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2013

2014/2217(INI) - 10/03/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 441 votes to 205, with 52 abstentions, a resolution on progress on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2013.

Equality and Europe 2020 strategy: Parliament called on the European Institutions and the Member States to:

mainstream the issues of gender, women's rights and equal opportunities **in their policy making, budget procedures** and the implementation of EU programmes and activities, by means of pro-active measures, especially in connection with stimulus packages;

- integrate a **gender pillar** into the Europe 2020 strategy to measure progress on reducing the gender gap in employment;

- develop a **general plan for investment into social infrastructure**, as it has been estimated that with a gendered investment plan, European gross domestic product (GDP) would increase gradually.

The resolution stressed that need to tackle **poverty among women**, and in particular older women and single mothers by implementing more effective inclusion strategies and making more efficient use of social policy resources, not least the European Social Fund and the Structural Funds. Members called for the Country-Strategy Recommendations (CSRs) systemically to address the structural causes of female poverty.

Equality in the areas of employment and decision-making: noting that the gender gap in pay stands at 16.4% and that women make up 17.8% of the membership of large company boards, Parliament stressed the need to:

- **reduce gender gaps in pay and pension** also by addressing the persistent concentration of women in part-time, low-pay and precarious work. Give full effect to the rights provided for under Directive 2006/54/EC, including the principle of equal pay and pay transparency;

- **set specific employment targets** in the framework of their national reform programmes to ensure that women have the same opportunities as men to access and stay in the labour market;

- implement **proactive policies to promote good jobs for women** in order to meet the Europe 2020 targets by combating stereotypes and encouraging women to embrace careers in science;

- promote gender equality through, inter alia, the **presence of women in economic and political decision making** and, which is a question of fundamental rights and democracy.

Reconciliation of professional and private life: stressing the fact that increased flexibility in working arrangements can increase women's opportunities to participate actively in the labour market, but, at the same time, has a negative impact on women's wages and pensions; Parliament pointed out the need for **specific work-life balance proposals**, and encourages men and women to share occupational, family, and

social responsibilities more evenly. It called on the Commission to provide continuing financial support to Member States so that they can offer **affordable childcare systems**.

Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to establish **paid paternity leave** of at least ten working days. It also urged Member States to resume the negotiations on the maternity leave directive which is still at deadlock in the Council.

Violence against women: Parliament renewed its call on the Commission to submit a **proposal for a legislative act** establishing measures to promote and support the action of Member States in the field of preventing violence against women and girls, by supporting a **comprehensive and effective policy framework** on gender-based violence. Member States must work systematically on empowering women in reporting violence to authorities.

Gender stereotypes: the resolution called on the Commission to take decisive policy action to **fight gender stereotypes** and suggested to the Member States that they raise awareness of equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women in their educational systems.

Parliament maintained that women must have **control over their sexual and reproductive health and rights**, not least by having ready access to contraception and abortion.

Lastly, it considered it unfortunate that the **annual report** now ranked only as a working document annexed to the report on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and urged the Commission to restore the full political legitimacy of the annual report by having it officially adopted in its own right.