Gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament

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The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report by Angelika MLINAR (ALDE, AT) on Gender Mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament.

The report recalled that achieving gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, economic growth, social inclusion and sustainability. However, progress in achieving gender equality in the EU is stagnating and at this pace will not be achieved for some time yet.

One of the competences of the committee responsible is to contribute to the implementation and further development of gender mainstreaming in all policy areas. Whereas the majority of parliamentary committees generally give importance to gender mainstreaming, others exhibit little or no interest in this matter. Moreover, insufficient funds and human resources are being allocated to ensure real progress in gender mainstreaming of Parliament's activities.

General assessment of the existing institutional framework: the report noted that female representation in key decision-making positions at political and administrative level, including within Parliament's political groups, remains low. Different bodies are in charge of developing and implementing gender mainstreaming both at policy and working life level in the Parliament. Members regret that the activities of these different bodies are not being coordinated or integrated within Parliament or with other institutions. Effective cooperation is called for between all actors in this institutional framework. They reiterated their commitment to regularly adopt and implement a policy plan for gender mainstreaming within Parliament.

Members called for ongoing development of the **gender mainstreaming network** (a network which assesses, through a questionnaire, the state of play of gender mainstreaming in each policy area). However, they noted the need for greater and active participation by MEPs in the network.

Gender mainstreaming tools: the committee stressed that the practice of using 'gender mainstreaming amendments'(GMAs) has proved to be more effective than opinions as they are more concise, can be more rapidly submitted and relate to key, specific and delimited issues. It reiterated its call on the competent committee to include this practice of GMAs in the Rules of Procedure, taking into account the specific role of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in gender mainstreaming as a horizontal principle.

Members regretted that despite the interinstitutional declaration on ensuring gender mainstreaming annexed to the Multiannual Financial Framework, no measures concerning gender budgeting have so far been taken. They also deplored that the gender budgeting exercise has revealed that the gender perspective is far from being assumed in all policies, at all levels and at every stage of the policymaking process. In this context, they noted that it is particularly crucial to **build up in-house capacity on gender-responsive budgeting** in order to enhance Parliament's scrutiny role on these matters.

Members noted that the Commission is considering issuing a report on gender mainstreaming in the Commission in 2017. They also reaffirmed the need for sufficient allocation of resources also at Parliament level in order to develop gender impact assessments and gender-based analysis.

The committee noted that, in the replies to the questionnaires on the state of gender mainstreaming in the parliamentary committees, specific tools were highlighted as being effective in integrating a gender perspective in the work of committees, including:

- distribution of key documents and inclusion of gender equality issues in the terms of reference of studies commissioned;
- focusing attention on the use of specific terminology and definitions in relation to gender equality issues;
- promoting ex-ante and ex-post assessment of draft proposals for legislation and for future agreements;
- training and awareness-raising activities for Members, staff, political advisers and assistants.

The report called for an **accreditation system** to be established so that those who undergo gender mainstreaming training at Parliament can receive formal certification, which they can carry through their career paths.

Gender mainstreaming in the work of committees: the committee reiterated its call for the commitment to delivering a biannual report on gender mainstreaming in the work of Parliament to be met. It regretted that a large majority of the committees have neither adopted nor discussed an action plan on gender equality for their work. It stated that a **standing rapporteur on gender mainstreaming** will reinforce the current structure.

Interinstitutional cooperation to support gender mainstreaming: Members stressed that stronger interinstitutional relations will improve the gender balance in EU policy-making. They called on the Commission to propose an appropriate framework for establishing interinstitutional gender mainstreaming cooperation, such as the establishment of an interinstitutional high level working group on gender mainstreaming, and also involving other stakeholders in this field.

They recommended that data be provided annually by the European Ombudsman to Parliament’s High Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity, as regards complaints about maladministration relating to gender equality in Parliament. They also called for the exchanges of best practice to be organised at all levels with other institutions and organisations. Regular interparliamentary meetings on gender mainstreaming should be organised.