Gender equality in the media sector in the EU

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The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report by Michaela ŠOJDROVÁ (EPP, CZ) on gender equality in the media sector in the EU.

Equality between women and men is a core principle of the European Union, as enshrined in the Treaties in Article 8 of TFEU. The media acting as a fourth power, have the capacity to influence and, ultimately, shape public opinion. They are one of the cornerstones of democratic societies and have a duty to combat all forms of discrimination and inequality by, among other things, portraying diversified social role models.

Media organisations have to be sensitised.

Women's presence in the media: the report recalled that women constituted 68 % of journalism and information graduates in the EU-28 in 2015, while employment data for the EU-28 over 2008-2015 show that the percentage of women employed in the media sector on average is continuously languishing at around 40 %.

Moreover, the share of women in decision-making in media in the EU-28 in 2015 was still below the gender balance zone (40-60 %) at just 32 %, while the share of women as board presidents was a mere 22 %.

Gender pay and pension gaps are a persistent problem in the EU, and are evident in different economic sectors, including in the media, where the gender pay gap is 17 %.

Against this context, Members called on the Member States and media organisations to support and develop **incentive measures**, including **quotas**, for the equal representation of women and men in decision-making posts, and for the effective monitoring of such efforts to be given greater prominence in these organisations.

Members condemned the widespread occurrence of sexual harassment and other types of abuse, especially in online gaming and social media, and encouraged media companies to create safe environments that are responsive to any instances of harassment.

Public and private media organisations are urged to adopt internal polices such as equal opportunities and diversity policies which include anti-harassment measures, maternity or parental leave schemes, flexible working arrangements that support work-life balance allowing women and men to benefit equally from parental leave and encourage men to take up paternity leave.

Media content and women: Members called on the Member States to promote content on gender equality in public media. They highlighted that violent and sexist media content is **negatively affecting women** and their participation in society and it may be causing psychological or physical damage to children and young people. The relevant stakeholders and authorities are urged to address the issue of **advertising** that indirectly encourages eating disorders such as anorexia, and to take other steps to protect particularly vulnerable persons, including girls and young women, against such content.

Members recommended that **soft measures** such as gender equality plans or guidelines should be given even more prominence in media organisations and advises that these protocols set the standards for the positive portrayal of women.

Member States must ensure that the media, including online and social media, as well as advertising, is **free from any incitement to violence or hatred** directed against any person or group of persons.

Member States and the Commission are to promote self-regulation and co-regulation in the media through **codes of conduct**.

Examples of good practice: Member States encouraged Member States to support campaigns such as the Belgian Expertalia tool, the Czech 'Sexist Piggy' awards or the Swedish #TackaNej ('No, thanks') initiative, among others and to hold regular information and awareness-raising campaigns about gender-based discriminatory content in the media, and to report regularly on gender equality trends in the media.

The Commission is called on to **earmark special funding** for sub-programmes focusing on the advancement of women in the media industry and to establish an **EU award** for students in the media field for work related to gender equality.

Members called on:

- Member States to fully implement the existing legislation addressing gender equality, and to encourage regulatory bodies to pay attention to the presence and advancement of women and to non-stereotypical media content;
- the Commission to conduct further research into the participation of women in **senior positions** in the media;
- the Commission and the Member States to implement action programmes which ensure women's involvement in the design and implementation of effective and efficient gender-sensitive policies and programmes within media organisations;
- Member States to develop programmes to improve women's skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (**STEM**) subjects that are important for careers in the media sector with a more technical focus, such as sound and audiovisual technicians.