

Gender pay and pension gap in the EU: state of play, challenges and the way forward, and developing guidelines for the better evaluation and fairer remuneration of work in female-dominated sectors

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The European Parliament adopted, by 458 votes to 72, with 98 abstentions, a resolution on the gender pay and pension gap in the EU: state of play, challenges and the way forward, and developing guidelines for the better evaluation and fairer remuneration of work in female-dominated sectors.

State of play and benefits of gender equality for society

Members noted that across the EU, women's earnings are disproportionately lower than men's and that women are overrepresented among minimum wage earners. In 2023, the EU gender gap in hourly pay was 12%, with considerable variations between Member States, exceeding 18% in some.

The resolution stressed that to close the gender pay and pension gaps - which cost the Union EUR 390 billion in 2023 - evidence-based measures are needed, respecting the prerogatives of Member States and social partners.

Closing the gender employment gap could increase productivity, resulting in a 3.2 % to 5.5 % increase in GDP per capita by 2050, while more flexible working conditions, better work-life balance and higher wages encourage more women to enter the labour market, leading to an increase in the productive capacity of the economy.

Way forward

Parliament welcomed the Commission's continued efforts to promote gender equality and invited it to:

- present a new EU gender equality strategy that is detailed, results-oriented and ambitious, building on previous progress and best practices,
- propose a **dedicated action plan** to eradicate the gender pay and pension gaps, through evidence-based measures, adopting a cross-sectoral approach and with EU-level quantitative and time-bound goals.

The Commission is invited to collaborate with Member States and social partners to develop **guidelines** and a **European pilot project** for gender-neutral job evaluation and classification systems, allowing for an EU-wide comparison of work of equal value and the definition of clear criteria for fairly assessing the value of work and for merit-based pay systems in women-dominated sectors.

Member States are invited to:

- reward work and **promote solutions that strengthen families in all their diversity** while ensuring fiscal responsibility and support for enterprises, such as: (i) expanding flexible working arrangements for parents and individuals and the right to disconnect, (ii) offering tax incentives for caregiving years and

benefits for single parents, and (iii) investing in the provision of high-quality, affordable and accessible childcare and long-term care services;

- encourage actions, through social dialogue and collective bargaining, aimed at **facilitating women's full participation in the labour market** and reducing their rates of career breaks and part-time work, which are higher than men's.

Members called for specific measures to facilitate women's **return to work** after lengthy career breaks, with reintegration measures and targeted incentives such as reskilling schemes.

The resolution stressed the need to:

- foster women's entrepreneurship and the role of women-led businesses in improving economic empowerment and potential earnings over a lifetime;

- encourage more women to put themselves forward through leadership, development, mentorship and support for work-life balance;

- eliminate occupational gender segmentation, (i) by recognising the value of sectors dominated by women such as education, health care and social services, in terms of remuneration and working conditions and (ii) by enabling more women to participate in high-paying sectors, such as ICT, STEAM and finance;

- guarantee equitable access for women and girls to all disciplines, at all levels of education and training, and to eliminate cultural and gender-related prejudices and stereotypes from curricula and career guidance;

- better financially value the work done in women-dominated sectors, and to guarantee the right to equal pay for work of equal value.

Parliament called for **simplifying access to the formal economy**, promoting measures to combat the grey economy and formalising employment contracts to protect workers in informal sectors, such as domestic work, personal care, agriculture and seasonal jobs.

It is also important to (i) ensure **robust social protection systems**, taking into account the gender dimension, including for people who interrupt their careers to care for dependents; (ii) examine fiscally responsible and work-oriented solutions that support caregivers' return to the labour market; and (iii) intensify efforts to combat in-work poverty, which has a negative impact on the living standards of women, including informal workers.

Parliament reiterated the need for **gender mainstreaming** into EU and national policies, particularly those concerning employment, health, disability, pensions and sport, and in policy decision-making. It stressed the need to integrate gender pension gap indicators into the EU social scoreboard. It emphasised the importance of the swift transposition and implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive, and of the Gender Balance on Corporate Boards Directive.

The Commission and Member States are invited to ensure robust enforcement and, where possible, the strengthening of current EU and national legislation to guarantee equality in career development, especially after maternity leave.