Basic information

2009/2101(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Equality between women and men in the European Union — 2009 **Subject** 4.10.04 Gender equality 4.10.08 Equal treatment of persons, non-discrimination	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	TARABELLA Marc (S&D)	17/09/2009

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	ŠPIDLA Vladimír

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
27/02/2009	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2009)0077	Summary
19/10/2009	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
25/01/2010	Vote in committee		Summary
01/02/2010	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0004/2010	
08/02/2010	Debate in Parliament		
10/02/2010	Decision by Parliament	T7-0021/2010	Summary
10/02/2010	Results of vote in Parliament		
10/02/2010	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2009/2101(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Annual report
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148-p2
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	FEMM/7/01000

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE429.680	09/11/2009	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE430.929	09/12/2009	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0004/2010	01/02/2010	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0021/2010	10/02/2010	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2009)0077	27/02/2009	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2010)2011	02/06/2010	

Equality between women and men in the European Union — 2009

2009/2101(INI) - 10/02/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 381 votes to 253, with 31 abstentions, a resolution on equality between women and men in the European Union.

Gender equality at a time of economic upheaval: Parliament congratulates the Commission for emphasizing, in its 2009 report, the importance of strengthening gender equality policies at a time of economic upheaval, but points to the need for further practical action and new policies. Members are critical of the fact that economic recovery projects mainly focus on male dominated employment. They underline that support for the future of men's rather than women's employment increases rather than decreases gender inequality, and insist that **gender equality must be mainstreamed in European, national and international plans for economic recovery**. Parliament considers that the crisis is likely to affect women above all because of budget cuts in the Member States.

Parliament urges the Council, Commission and Member States to take certain measures to defend social rights and to guarantee that the economic and financial crisis will not lead to cuts in social benefits and social services, in particular child care and care for the elderly. It calls on the Member States which have to implement fiscal consolidation policies to prepare recovery policies that reflect the specific needs and circumstances of women and men, particularly through the use of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting.

Improve the quality of work for women: Parliament welcomes the fact that the target of a 60% female employment rate by 2010, set at the Lisbon European Council of March 2000, will soon be reached, but notes that a high proportion of the jobs concerned are, regrettably, insecure and poorly paid. It deplores also the major disparities among the Member States in this field, (the rate of employment varies from 37.4% to 74.3%, depending on the Member State), and asks the Member States, therefore, to take the measures needed in order to apply Directive 2006/54/EC effectively. Members also suggest other measures, such as (i) giving consideration to the situation of spouses helping in small family businesses and developing the legal construct of shared ownership, in order to ensure full recognition of women's rights in the agricultural sector; (ii) positive action to integrate women in projects and programmes on ecological transformation, i.e. in the renewables sector, and (iii) promoting female entrepreneurship in the industrial sector.

Equal pay for equal work: Parliament points out that women's personal income and paid employment remains key to their economic autonomy. They are exposed to a higher risk of poverty because the gender pay gap has remained stubbornly wide. Member States are asked to apply Directive 2006 /54/EC immediately and, in particular, to promote the principal of 'equal pay for equal work' or that of 'work of equal value'. Action should also be taken with a view to reducing pension disparities between women and men. Parliament deplores the fact that the Commission has still not presented its legislative proposal for the revision of the existing legislation relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women (following its resolution of 18 November 2008).

Sharing of family responsibilities: the Commission and Member States are asked to run awareness-raising campaigns in schools, workplaces and the media in order to promote the diversification of career choices, especially for girls, and to combat persistent sexist stereotyping and degrading images, with particular emphasis on campaigns that highlight men's role in better **sharing of family responsibilities**.

Facilitating work-life balance: Member States are called upon to foster the spread of good practices in this area. Parliament emphasises the importance of pre-school childcare provision, child-minding services and the provision of assistance to elderly persons. Whilst it congratulates the Commission on the steps it has taken and particularly on its proposals for revision of Directive 92/85/EEC in relation to maternity protection and Directive 86/613/EC in relation to 'assisting spouses' in family businesses, it considers that the Commission's proposed revision of Directive 92/85/EEC falls short of what would be desirable from the point of view of promoting work-life balance for men and women. It maintains that **paternity leave is an issue that needs to be addressed at European level**. It considers that maternity leave should be linked to paternity leave so as to afford better protection to women on the labour market.

More women in positions of responsibility: Member States are asked to take effective steps, notably through legislation, to encourage gender balance in corporate, administrative and political positions of responsibility, with **binding targets** to ensure the equal representation of women and men. Parliament notes in this regard the positive effects of the use of electoral quotas on the representation of women. It welcomes the significant increase in the numbers of female chairs of parliamentary committees and female EP vice-presidents. Members consider in this regard that the proportion of women Commissioners (representing 33% of the total) - achieved with great difficulty - is the bare minimum. It proposes that, in future nominations, there should be two candidates, one of each gender, so as to facilitate the composition of a more representative Commission.

Parliament indicates that the proportion of female MEPs rose from 32.1% in the 2004-2009 parliamentary term to 35% after the elections of 7 June 2009 and there were increases, too, in the proportion of female chairs of parliamentary committees, up from 25% to 41%, and the proportion of female EP vice-presidents, up from 28.5% to 42.8%.

Migrant and vulnerable groups of women: Parliament calls for particular attention to be given to the integration of migrants while also ensuring that they are given access to education and training, and courses in the language of their host country. It asks for particular note to be taken of more vulnerable groups of women – disabled women, women with dependants, elderly women, minority and immigrant women and women prisoners – and to develop targeted measures to meet their needs.

Fight against trafficking: Members call on the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden to act at once to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. They point out that violence against women is still a major problem, and call on the Commission to establish a European Year for combating violence against women. Parliament endorses the Spanish Presidency's proposals to establish a European inter-gender violence monitoring centre and introduce the European protection order for victims and a common EU-wide telephone helpline for victims. It recalls that some 20-25% of women suffer physical violence, and more than 10% sexual violence. This is why Parliament calls on the Commission to start drawing up a proposal for a comprehensive directive on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women, including trafficking (see this point in the joint resolution adopted on the same day – RSP/2009/2782)

Sexual and reproductive rights: lastly, with 361 votes for, 237 against and 40 abstentions, the plenary stressed that women must have control over their sexual and reproductive rights, notably through easy access to **contraception** and **abortion**. Women must have access free of charge to consultation on abortion, and Parliament supports actions to improve women's access to sexual and reproductive health services and to raise their awareness of their rights and of available services.

Equality between women and men in the European Union — 2009

2009/2101(INI) - 27/02/2009 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present the 2009 report on equality between women and men.

CONTENT : the European Commission reports each year on progress towards gender equality and presents challenges and priorities for the future. 2008 was the midpoint for the implementation of the Roadmap for Equality between women and men, as well as Member States' implementation of the European Pact for Gender Equality.

The report states that shared efforts have produced positive results, particularly as regards female employment, but **overall progress is still too slow** in most areas and gender equality is far from being achieved.

This report addresses the challenges and the policy responses for removing barriers to women's and men's full participation in the labour market. It also addresses the importance of correcting the gender imbalance in decision-making. Although the economic slowdown has changed the context, it is important to continue to strengthen gender equality policies.

Main developments:

- **gender gaps:** female employment in the EU is now close to the Lisbon objective of 60% by 2010, having increased from 51.1% in 1997 to 58.3% in 2007. However, there are major differences between Member States, with figures varying from 36.9% to 73.2%. The average gap in

employment rates between women and men is narrowing. However, if one compares the employment rate of women and men with children under 12 to care for, this gender gap is almost doubled. In the EU more than 6 million women in the 25 to 49 age group say they are obliged not to work or to work only part-time because of their family responsibilities. **Better reconciliation of work and private life for both women and men is essential** to achieve gender equality. The report states that the development of affordable and quality childcare facilities is vital for enabling both parents to combine work and family life.

- **education:** women accounted for 58.9% of university degrees in the EU in 2006 (56.7% in 2004). However, gender differences remain as regards the fields of study, especially in engineering and computing while women predominate in business, administration and law (60 %). Women are still lagging behind men in the use of new technologies and have difficulties in accessing more specialist ICT-related jobs. Women' s high level of education is not directly reflected in the positions they hold in the labour market. A **better gender balance across studies and occupations** could contribute to meeting future skills and labour market needs;
- **gender pay gap:** one of the consequences of gender segregation on the labour market is the persisting gender pay gap (17.4% on average in the EU), partly due to the fact that women are concentrated in less valued jobs and positions than men. Women are more at risk of falling into poverty, and more vulnerable in times of rising unemployment since they are more often on fixed-term contracts than men.
- **high level positions:** the number of female managers in the EU has remained stable over the last few years, averaging 30%, and figures are even lower in a majority of Member States. The proportion of women directors of top quoted company boards is 3% across the EU, while one in ten company board members is a woman. This is paradoxical when female students outnumber male in business, administration and law.
- **politics:** the average share of women members of national parliaments increased from 16% to 24% between 1997 and 2008, but national figures range from 9% to 46%. In national governments, one out of four senior ministers is a woman, but variations between Member States range from 0 to 60% female ministers. There has been some progress within the European Institutions, but women are still underrepresented in top positions. Only three out of ten members of the European Parliament are women.

Policy and legislative developments: one of the main initiatives in 2008 for achieving gender equality was the adoption by the European Commission of several measures aiming at supporting better work- life balance:

- amendment of Directive 92/85/EEC on maternity protection (increasing the minimum maternity leave from 14 to 18 weeks);
- strengthening the provisions of Directive 86/613/EEC for self-employed workers and 'assisting spouses' in family businesses;
- following a two-stage consultation by the Commission, the social partners started negotiations on family-related leave other than maternity leave..

The report goes on to describe: i) equal participation of women and men in political decision-making; ii) initiatives to achieve equal treatment between women and men (monitoring the implementation of Directives 2002/73/EC and 2004/113/EC); iii) reviewing the adequacy of EU current legislation on equal pay to tackle the gender pay gap.

Policy orientations: amongst the actions which the Commission envisages in the short to medium term, the report highlights the following :

1. encouraging equal sharing of private and family responsibilities between women and men: the main measures will be as follows :

- the development of affordable, accessible and quality care services for children and other dependants. The potential of the Structural Funds and EAFRD should be fully utilised ;
- reconciliation policies need to allow for individual choices for both women and men as regards flexible working and leave arrangements. Measures such as paternity leave can encourage men to share parenting and other care responsibilities equally with women;
- reconciliation policies need to be implemented at all levels in the workplace, so that a more equitable use of women's and men's time becomes the norm;
- the proposals reviewing the two directives on maternity leave and rights of self-employed women need to be adopted swiftly by the legislator.

2. tackling stereotypes: combating gender stereotypes means tackling the root cause of persisting gender gaps in the labour market. The Commission proposes measures to:

- remove discriminatory practices and attitudes from educational material and methods, teaching and vocational guidance;
- strengthen measures for training and awareness-raising at the workplace;
- encourage the media, including the advertising industry to transmit non-stereotyped images and content, in particular of women in decision-making positions.

3. promoting equal participation of women and men in decision-making positions: investing in gender balance in business and management can improve corporate governance and profitability. The Commission proposes the following :

- the promotion of equality in decision-making needs stronger commitment and partnership at all levels: governments, regional and local authorities, political parties, social partners, business managers, human resources teams, NGOs, educational institutions, media, men and women ;
- specific policies and measures, including where appropriate positive action, equality plans, mentoring and targeted training. All appointments, recruitment, job and skill evaluation, salaries and promotion should be transparent and gender-unbiased;
- improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of comparable data existing at EU level broken down by sex;
- encourage political parties and European and national parliaments to take specific measures to involve more women and improve the balanced representation of women and men on voting lists and in nominations for elected offices.

4. creating higher awareness and better understanding of gender equality: more and better communication should create awareness and make gender issues more visible and understandable at all levels of society. The report proposes:

- to reinforce gender mainstreaming by intensified training and capacity-building for those involved in policy-making;

- to develop gender statistics and indicators based on existing data, including the integration of a gender perspective in policy analysis and monitoring;
- to improve knowledge and understanding of gender issues at all levels of society.

Next steps: in view of the contribution that gender equality can make to growth, employment and social cohesion, the Commission invites the European Council to urge the Member States to respond without delay to the challenges outlined in this report by reaffirming their commitment to integrating the gender dimension in all policy fields in partnership with the social partners and civil society.