



2017/2008(INI)

23.6.2017

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

on Women's Economic Empowerment in the Private and Public Sectors in the
EU
(2017/2008(INI))

Rapporteur: Tania González Peñas

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas structural barriers to women's economic empowerment are the result of multiple and intersecting forms of inequalities, stereotypes and discrimination in the private and public spheres;
- B. whereas greater economic empowerment of women and improving gender equality presents an economic opportunity which will have a strong positive impact on EU GDP and will lead by 2050 to an increase in EU GDP per capita by 6.1 % to 9.6 %¹ and whereas eliminating gender gaps in employment will lead to an increase in growth by 15 % to 45 % in the Member States²; whereas taking into account forgone earnings, missed welfare contributions and additional public finance costs, the total yearly cost of the lower female employment rate was EUR 370 billion in 2013 which corresponds to 2.8 % of the EU's GDP³, while improving gender equality would also lead to an additional 10.5 million jobs⁴;
- C. whereas women's economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to enable women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society and to increase women's access to economic resources and opportunities such as employment, financial services, property and other assets, and skills development; whereas it is essential to ensure that women and men have the same rights and opportunities to take part in economic life and in the labour market, which is not only crucial but instrumental for the EU's economic growth leading to a positive impact on GDP, inclusiveness, competitiveness of businesses and challenges related to an ageing population;
- D. whereas the EU 2020 strategy establishes the EU's target of 75 % of men and women in employment by 2020 and, in particular, of closing the gender gap in employment; whereas coordinated efforts will be required to facilitate women's labour-market participation;
- E. whereas maternity should not be seen as an obstacle to women's professional development and consequently to their emancipation;
- F. whereas women and men have equal rights and duties in relation to parenthood (with the exception of recovery after giving birth), given that the burden of bringing up children should be shared and should therefore not be assigned exclusively to mothers;
- G. whereas in households where the youngest child is aged under seven years of age men spend 41 hours per week in paid work and 15 hours in unpaid work, while women spend

¹ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE); Economic benefits of gender equality in the EU (2017) page 3.
http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/economic_benefits_of_gender_equality_briefing_paper.pdf

² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-09-1527_en.htm?locale=en

³ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2016/labour-market/the-gender-employment-gap-challenges-and-solutions>

⁴ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE); Economic benefits of gender equality in the EU (2017) page 3.
http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/economic_benefits_of_gender_equality_briefing_paper.pdf

32 hours per week in paid work, but 39 hours in unpaid work;

- H. whereas balancing work and family life is essential in order to boost women's professional careers, and this requires public and private childcare structures;
 - I. whereas although women account for almost 60 % of graduates in the EU, they remain under-represented in science, mathematics, IT, engineering and related careers owing to persisting hindering factors; highlights, as a result, the fact that inequality in occupations is taking on new forms and, despite the investment in education, young women are still twice as likely as young men to be economically inactive; whereas it is estimated that jobs in the area of ICT and the computer sciences will play a significant role in the short term, in terms of both vacancies and earnings, and it is of utmost importance to attract more women to study these subjects;
 - J. whereas, according to the predictions, if women's productivity levels were to rise to match men's, the EU's GDP could grow by 27 %;
 - K. whereas according to OECD studies companies with more women on their boards experience greater profitability compared to those with all-male boards, even though in 2014 women accounted for just 20.2% of board members of the largest publicly listed companies registered in EU countries;
1. Considers that women's economic empowerment is crucial in order to reduce poverty and promote economic development; insists, however, that the accomplishment of economic independence is only a first step for women's economic empowerment while equality in the political, social and cultural arena are also needed to empower women in the private and public sectors; considers that the implementation of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value applied by the Member States are necessary steps for women's economic empowerment and the consolidation of their fundamental rights; calls on the Commission and the Member States to guarantee this principle as defined in Article 157 of the TFEU and to combat direct and indirect discrimination in the labour market in order to achieve women's economic empowerment;
 2. Calls on the Member States to fully implement the Employment Equality Directive and Directive 2010/41/EU on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity; calls on the Commission to ensure better application of these directives and to promote the implementation of plans on gender equality among companies;
 3. Calls on the Member States to protect women's rights and promote gender equality and social well-being, by combating pay and pension gaps, by addressing and eliminating breaches of anti-discrimination legislation in employment, and by combating precarious, undesirable and insecure forms of work and employment, understanding precarious employment as that which does not comply with international, national and Union standards and laws, and/or which does not provide sufficient resources for a decent life or adequate social protection, such as discontinuous employment, the majority of temporary contracts, zero-hours contracts or involuntary part-time work, as well as by creating conditions to guarantee the right to return from voluntary part-time work to full time employment;

4. Deplores the persistence of the gender pay gap, which constitutes an infringement of the fundamental principle of equal pay for equal work for female and male workers enshrined in Article 157 of the TFEU and which in particular affects women having and raising children; calls on the EU and the Member States, in cooperation with the social partners and gender equality organisations, to set out and implement policies to close the gender pay gap; calls on the Member States to carry out wage-mapping on a regular basis as a complement to these efforts;
5. Stresses that preventing and eliminating the gender pension gap and reducing women's poverty in old age first and foremost depends on creating conditions in which women can make equal pension contributions through their increased inclusion in the labour market and safeguarding equal opportunities in terms of pay, career advancement and possibilities to work full-time;
6. Highlights that the causes and consequences of the gender pension gap need to be addressed, as this is an obstacle to the economic independence of women in old age, when they face a higher risk of poverty than men; stresses the importance of tax and benefit systems in Member States that are free from disincentives for second earners to work or work more, because women often are second earners; invites the Member States to replace household unit models with the individualisation of taxation and social security rights in order to ensure that women have individual rights and to counter dependency status through their partners or through the state;
7. Stresses that flexible forms of work make it easier for women to balance their work and family lives and may positively contribute towards the inclusion of disadvantaged groups of women in working life;
8. Calls on Member States to improve general work conditions, including the family-friendly organisation of working time in consultation with workers;
9. Urges Member States to ensure adequate paternity leave and pay in order to ensure the same opportunities for women and men in career advancement;
10. Stresses the need to eliminate the horizontal and vertical gender segregation of the labour market by tackling the direct and indirect causes, addressing discriminatory social behaviours and stereotypes, diversifying the career choices of women and men, and promoting the equal participation of women and men in the labour market, quality education, formal and non-formal training and life-long learning and training as well as co-responsibility in caring; calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement measures to reduce gender stereotypes and segregation in the labour market, education, training and as well as in domestic work and caring responsibilities in order to improve the future earnings and socioeconomic conditions of women;
11. Recalls that sustainable public and private funding for education are the basis for an inclusive, socially just and democratic society – this priority must be reflected in budgets; highlights the particular role that education for girls and young women plays for their future employment prospects and economic empowerment; calls, in this regard, on the Member States to strengthen policies and increase investment in quality education and training and to promote sectors and positions where women are under-represented, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as to increase female

employment in these quality jobs; highlights the importance of vocational education and training (VET) in diversifying career choices, introducing women and men to non-traditional career opportunities; recalls the importance of emphasising in the education systems the principle of equality between men and women and that of the equal right to take part in economic life;

12. Points out that the rapid spread of digital technology is having a profound impact on the labour market by changing value chains, conditions and the nature of work; notes that opportunities brought about by digitalisation may serve as an effective tool for further inclusion of women into the labour market as well as better reconciliation of professional and domestic duties for both women and men; further points out that digitalisation results in a growing demand for skills to address the existing digital gap between men and women; highlights that the demand for new skills, particularly in the ICT field, needs to be tackled through training as well as through further education and lifelong learning, in the interests of promoting digital literacy and tackling the existing gender gap in order to enlarge the pool of highly qualified candidates; calls therefore on the Member States and the Commission to advance their efforts to boost inclusion in the context of ICT and promote digital skills and e-literacy among women and girls, who remain under-represented in this sector, which may contribute to their economic empowerment and independence, and result in the reduction of the total gender wage gap;
13. Calls on the Commission, together with the Member States, to promote and support female entrepreneurship initiatives as it can provide women with the knowledge they need to found or co-found their own businesses based on their innovative ideas; it is crucial in this regard to provide information on access to training, to support women entrepreneurs in accessing alternative sources of funding, business networking opportunities as well as advising on the start-up, management and growth of their businesses in the early phases;
14. Calls on the Member States to pursue specific, active employment and training policies in order to support the return to work of women who have put their careers on hold to look after dependants;
15. Stresses the need to ensure that the structural and investment funds are used to improve education and training with a view to improving labour market access and combating unemployment, poverty and social exclusion of women; highlights that the 20 % share of the ESF allocated to social inclusion measures and social innovation projects could be used more actively to support initiatives such as small local projects aimed at empowering women experiencing poverty and social exclusion;
16. Asks the Member States for legislative and non-legislative measures to guarantee the economic and social rights of workers in the so-called feminised sectors; highlights the importance of preventing the over-representation of women in precarious employment and recalls the need to combat the precarious nature of these sectors, such as domestic work or caring; recognises that domestic work and the provision of household services, which are largely feminised, are often performed as undeclared work; calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote and further develop the formal sector of domestic services also through the European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work, to recognise household services, family employment and home-care as a valuable economic sector with a job creation potential which needs to be better regulated within the Member States with a

view to creating both secure positions for domestic workers and providing families with a capacity to assume their role as employers and opportunities for reconciliation of private and professional life for the working families;

17. Points to the relevance of the caring and domestic work sector and its job creation potential, and stresses the need to create quality employment leading to decent jobs in the care economy in the public and private sectors; stresses the importance of extending social protection and raising wages in these sectors where women make up the majority of the workforce, such as personal care workers, cleaners and helpers, catering staff and health associate professionals among other things;
18. Stresses the importance of paying attention to the specific needs and multifaceted challenges of some of the vulnerable groups facing particular barriers to entry to the labour market such as young women, women in rural areas, women with disabilities, as well as women refugees and migrants; calls on the Member States to ensure their early and easy access to quality training, including internships, in order to ensure full integration into our societies and the labour market, taking into consideration the refugees' existing informal and formal skills and competences, talents and know-how; calls on the Member States to take up measures to prevent the intersectional discrimination that particularly affects women in vulnerable situations; emphasises how important it is that Directive 2000/78/EC on equal treatment in employment and occupation, and Directive 2000/43/EC on equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, are implemented correctly;
19. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to enforce and improve the practical application of the already existing laws and workplace policies and improve those laws and policies where appropriate to protect women from direct and indirect discrimination, particularly in the selection, hiring, retention, vocational training and promotion of women in employment in both the public and private sectors and to offer women equal opportunities in terms of pay and career advancement;
20. Highlights the importance of the principle of gender-neutrality in job evaluation and classification systems in both the public and private sectors; welcomes the efforts of Member States to promote policies that prevent discrimination in recruitment and encourages them to promote non-gender identification résumés to discourage companies and public administration of gender bias during the recruitment process; calls on the Commission to explore the possibility of developing an anonymised Europass CV; suggests that Member States draw up programmes to combat social and gender stereotypes, particularly among the youngest groups, as a way of preventing a professional categorisation of job scales that frequently restricts women's access to the highest-paid positions and jobs;
21. Calls on the Member States to put in place proactive policies and appropriate investment aimed and designed to support women and men entering, returning to, staying and advancing in the labour market, after periods of family and care-related types of leave, with sustainable and quality employment, in line with Article 27 of the European Social Charter; stresses in particular the need to guarantee reinstatement to the same post or to an equivalent or similar post, protection against dismissal and less favourable treatment as a result of pregnancy, applying for or taking family leave, and a protection period after their

return so that they can readjust to their job;

22. Urges Member States to implement, where applicable, parental protection schemes comprising mandatory exclusive maternity and paternity leave for each parent, as well as parental leave that can be used in accordance with a joint decision by the parents, as a way of recognising the rights of both parents and countering any presumption on the part of employers that parenting responsibilities fall exclusively on mothers;
23. Stresses that remuneration and social security contributions should continue to be paid during leave;
24. Highlights the importance of equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors; recalls the importance of the 'Women on Boards Directive' which aims at balancing the share of the under-represented sex in non-executive board-member positions in publicly listed companies, with the exception of small and medium-sized enterprises; calls furthermore on the Member States to bring the work in the Council to a conclusion so that negotiations with Parliament can begin to work towards achieving the objective that by 2020 at least 40% of non-executive directors on listed company boards are women; calls on the Member States and the companies to improve the gender balance in management positions in the labour market, in economic and political decision-making structures and institutions, as well as in enterprises and on corporate boards through, e.g. gender quotas;
25. Emphasises that access to credit, financial services and advice is key to empowering women facing social exclusion in entrepreneurship and increasing their representation in the private sector; recommends therefore that the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and the European Social Fund (ESF) should be examined for their more flexible and less bureaucratic use in order to support women entrepreneurs in the start-up phase;
26. Encourages women's leadership in trade unions and workers' organisations and urges all trade union leaders to guarantee equal representation and to effectively represent the interests of women workers;
27. Stresses the importance of social partners and collective bargaining in the economic empowerment of women workers and encourages a revision of working categories when gender bias on employment categories can result in different job positions performing equal tasks;
28. Calls on the Member States to strengthen and enforce the full exercise of the right of collective bargaining in the private and public sectors; calls in particular on the social partners to use collective bargaining to advance equal opportunities for women and men, to ensure that the existing equal treatment legislation is applied in practice and to address and combat the gender pay gap; stresses, in this regard, that social partners have a high potential to support gender equality on the labour market by actively raising the issue of equal and decent pay for women and men during collective bargaining; considers it to be good practice to appoint equality representatives to raise awareness, inform and liaise regarding gender equality at work;
29. Calls on the Member States to implement and enforce public social care policies as well as ensuring the availability of and access to high-quality, affordable and universally

accessible care services for children, older persons and other dependants by an upward revision of the Barcelona objectives on childcare facilities; calls furthermore for Member States to define similar targets concerning long-term care services, and to promote the equal sharing of unpaid domestic work and co-responsibility in care; emphasises that the availability of childcare is a vital precondition for women's ability to fulfil their potential in the workplace and for the reconciliation of private and professional life for working families as well as increasing women's participation in the labour market; recalls the important role of the public service for reaching gender equality; notes that expenditures in these fields should be viewed as investments that will bring economic returns;

30. Stresses the need to eliminate gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work and to promote equal sharing of responsibilities, costs and care for children and for dependants between women and men, and also within society as a whole, in order to ensure their position as equal earners and equal carers; points in this respect to the need for specific proposals making for better work-life balance;
31. Calls for co-legislators to put forward new effective measures to improve work-life balance, including legislative proposals as regards maternity, paternity, parental and carer's leave, in order to promote gender equality by improving women's access to the labour market and the equal sharing of domestic and care tasks between women and men;
32. Urges Member States to incorporate mechanisms into their labour legislation aimed at offering an incentive for the creation of flexible working patterns and distance working models that will make it easier for parents to look after their children after school hours and help strike a balance between work-related and family responsibilities; stresses at the same time that employees and employers have a shared responsibility to design and agree on the most appropriate arrangements;
33. Calls on the Member States to guarantee rest leave to parents of children with disabilities, paying particular attention to single mothers, based on an examination of best practices;
34. Urges Member States to invest in informal after-school play-centred learning facilities that could provide support for children after school and crèche hours in particular, as a way of responding to the gap between school and business hours;
35. Encourages the Member States based on the provisions of the Public Procurement Directive (2014/24/EU) to promote the use of social clauses in public procurement as a tool for enhancing equality between women and men where relevant national legislations exists and can act as grounds for social clauses;
36. Stresses the importance of national initiatives that make financing for female entrepreneurs more accessible and emphasises, in this respect, the potential of micro-loans;
37. Calls on the Member States to mainstream the gender perspective into their national skills and labour market policies and to include such measures in national action plans and/or as part of the European Semester, in line with the employment guidelines.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	21.6.2017
Result of final vote	+: 35 -: 4 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	Guillaume Balas, Brando Benifei, Mara Bizzotto, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Enrique Calvet Chambon, Lampros Fountoulis, Elena Gentile, Marian Harkin, Czesław Hoc, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Agnes Jongerius, Rina Ronja Kari, Jan Keller, Ádám Kósa, Jean Lambert, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Jeroen Lenaers, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, João Pimenta Lopes, Georgi Pirinski, Marek Plura, Terry Reintke, Sofia Ribeiro, Robert Rochefort, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Siôn Simon, Romana Tomc, Ulrike Trebesius, Marita Ulvskog, Jana Žitňanská
Substitutes present for the final vote	Georges Bach, Lynn Boylan, Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, António Marinho e Pinto, Tamás Meszerics, Joachim Schuster, Michaela Šojdrová
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Xabier Benito Ziluaga, Monika Smolková, Milan Zver

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

35	+
ALDE	Enrique Calvet Chambon, Marian Harkin, Marinho e Pinto, Robert Rochefort
GUE/NGL	Xabier Benito Ziluaga, Lynn Boylan, Rina Ronja Kari
PPE	Georges Bach, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Ádám Kósa, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Marek Plura, Sofia Ribeiro, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Michaela Šojdrová, Romana Tomc, Milan Zver,
S&D	Guillaume Balas, Brando Benifei, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Elena Gentile, Agnes Jongerius, Jan Keller, Miapetra Kumpula-Natri, Georgi Pirinski, Joachim Schuster, Siôn Simon, Monika Smolková, Marita Ulvskog
VERTS/ALE	Jean Lambert, Tamás Meszerics, Terry Reintke

4	-
ECR	Czesław Hoc, Ulrike Trebesius, Jana Žitňanská
NI	Lampros Fountoulis

3	0
ENF	Mara Bizzotto
GUE/GNL	João Pimenta Lopes
PPE	Jeroen Lenaers

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention