



2015/2222(INI)

22.4.2016

OPINION

of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on Workers representation on board level in Europe
(2015/2222(INI))

Rapporteur: Viorica Dăncilă

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SUGGESTIONS

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

- A. whereas equality between women and men is a founding principle of the European Union, enshrined in the Treaty on European Union and is ranked among its objectives and tasks, and whereas gender equality and diversity in worker representation at company board level is a key democratic principle with positive economic side-effects such as inclusive strategic decision making and a reduction in the gender pay gap;
- B. whereas only 21% of European listed companies guarantee workers' representation at board level and there are still ten Member States with no or very limited participation rights; whereas workers' participation strengthens European democracy and decision-making in diversity in practice, and whereas female workers' participation is one of the key elements that enhances productivity and economic growth;
- C. whereas equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the EU, recognised in the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which states that 'equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay' and whereas higher female participation in the labour market would have a positive impact on productivity, economic and social growth;
- D. whereas European leaders continually emphasise the importance of balanced representation of men and women on boards, both in the private and the public sphere, and whereas it is time for European leaders to demonstrate their commitment to this;
- E. whereas, although the number of women in corporate boardrooms is slowly rising, the situation varies in Member States, and whereas a broad consensus exists among the Member States in favour of taking measures to improve the gender balance on company boards;
- F. whereas the equal participation of women and men in decision-making is a matter of justice and is necessary to better reflect the composition of workforce in companies at all levels; whereas, for the sake of consistency, this principle should also apply to the governing structures of trade unions; whereas independent structures established by employee and employer organisations, including worker representation on boards, must not isolate women from the decision-making process but integrate them in that process instead;
- G. whereas women face persistent difficulties in reconciling work-life balance, while equality between women and men in worker representation on boards can contribute to an improvement in work-life balance, particularly for female workers;
- H. whereas over 51 % of the EU's population is female; whereas their needs and rights should be appropriately represented and supported;
- I. whereas studies show that the presence of worker representation is associated with a

gender pay gap that is smaller than in establishments without worker representation as workers' representatives may use their negotiating power to positively influence women's salaries or job performance processes;

- J. whereas one of the objectives of the Beijing Platform is to ensure equal access and the full participation of women in decision-making processes;
 - K. whereas women are under-represented in positions of responsibility in all fields;
 - L. whereas freedom of association and representation, and the right to information and consultation are fundamental rights and as such must be respected, protected and supported;
 - M. whereas workers must be closely and permanently involved in decision-making at all levels of the company;
 - N. whereas gender imbalance on corporate boards remains an important challenge for all Member States, constituting an untapped potential of skilled workers, especially women;
 - O. whereas there is no proper ratio between the percentage of women members of trade unions in Europe and the number of women serving on decision-making bodies or holding executive posts;
 - P. whereas worker representation is crucial in collective bargaining; whereas, collective bargaining and the representation of workers, including representation on boards, should take into account gender equality; whereas, collective bargaining should address the needs and rights of women workers, such as the right to maternity leave; whereas, in order for participation on boards and for collective bargaining and protection of labour rights to be gender balanced and more effectively applied, women negotiators must take part and express women's views;
1. Points out that gender inequalities remain despite the increasing participation of women in the labour market; believes that, gender balance, especially in regard to representation at board level, will not change without legally endorsed objectives; calls on all the Member States to implement the concept of worker representation at board level and introduce legislative measures requiring quotas where appropriate in order to improve gender balance on the governing bodies of trade unions and in worker representation at board level; calls for a monitoring system to be put in place and any non-compliance with quota requirements to result in sanctions consistent with national company laws;
 2. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the social partners to promote gender equality in worker representation at board level by developing awareness-raising measures and training about the benefits of equality in decision-making processes of companies and organisations, particularly in trade unions, and to closely monitor and follow up the progress made; encourages furthermore voluntary initiatives by companies in this field, including the reporting on best practices which would have a positive impact on their image among the general public and employees, by for example encouraging exchanges of best practices of companies in order to raise their staffs' awareness about the career patterns of men and women and by becoming personally involved in career monitoring and support programmes for female executives in their companies;

3. Stresses the need for the Member States to put in place affirmative policies in order to ensure gender balanced representation of workers, especially women at board level and decision-making procedures; calls for the Member States to design and implement work-life balance policies tailored to the needs of workers, especially for women, for the disabled, for migrants, for single-parent families and for other vulnerable groups of workers;
4. Invites the Member States to identify ways to increase the representation of women in corporate boardrooms including among worker representation by initiating a dialogue, not limited to the issue of quotas, with the boards of large companies and with the social partners, which could take place annually;
5. Invites all the Member States to introduce measures to encourage the career progression of women at all levels through positive actions such as networking and mentoring programmes in order to achieve gender equality in the workplace; underlines the need for a gender balanced model of decision-making at all levels within the company while ensuring that the gender pay gap which contributes significantly to the feminisation of poverty is eliminated;
6. Takes the view, furthermore, that best practices to promote gender balance in the governing bodies of trade unions and in worker representation at board level should be encouraged – such as voluntary initiatives ranging from effective corporate governance codes resulting in transparency, accountability and peer pressure to the implementation of the ‘comply or explain’ rule to clarify why gender balance is lacking;
7. Invites the Member States and the Commission to implement new policies to enable more women to become involved in managing companies, in particular by:
 - initiating a dialogue, not limited to the issue of quotas, with the boards of large companies and with the social partners about ways of increasing female representation, which could take place annually;
 - supporting initiatives to assess and promote male-female equality on recruitment committees and in other areas, e.g. wage differentials, job classification, training and career patterns; developing training on gender equality and non-discrimination;
8. Takes the view that the problem of unequal representation of women and men in the workplace depends primarily on a cultural and social heritage that repeats old patterns and models that penalise women and that action needs to be taken chiefly through measures to raise awareness among those involved in working processes;
9. Insists that recruitment to positions in corporate management bodies including on position of workers’ representation, must be based on the competence required in the form of skills, qualifications and experience and that the principles of transparency, objectiveness, inclusiveness, effectiveness, non-discrimination and gender equality must be observed in corporate recruitment policies;
10. Invites the appointing authorities, such as trade unions, to implement positive action measures to increase the number of female representatives of workers on boards in order to reach a critical threshold of 40% or, where appropriate, to present a gender balanced list

of candidates for this function;

11. Shares the view that female representation at board level and executive posts, along with high-quality paid employment for women, is key to women's economic independence and to greater equality between women and men in labour and in society as a whole;
12. Regrets that the Commission, despite the commitments shared, has failed to present a new Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's rights post-2015, including a proposal for the revision of the Maternity Leave Directive, thereby jeopardising the rights of millions of women and their families across EU; reminds the Commission and the Member States of the need to adopt positive measures for both women and men in order to ensure in particular work-life balance, labour rights, integration to labour market and, hence, the achievement of financial independence;
13. Asks the Commission and the Member States to step up their capacity for collecting gender-segregated statistics about worker board-level representatives making use of the work of EIGE and Eurostat, and to analyse them in order to monitor the number of women and men in key decision-making positions so as to ensure the promotion of gender equality at board level in Europe;
14. Encourages the European Institute for Gender Equality to draw up guidelines for the systematisation of data collection in the field at EU level, to cooperate with trade unions in establishing good practices in equality and in drafting training materials on the benefits of equality in organisations and the decision-making bodies of companies, particularly in terms of competitiveness, improving results and labour relations.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	19.4.2016
Result of final vote	+ : 17 - : 12 0 : 1
Members present for the final vote	Maria Arena, Catherine Bearder, Malin Björk, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Viorica Dăncilă, Iratxe García Pérez, Anna Hedh, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Elisabeth Köstinger, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Angelika Mlinar, Maria Noichl, Marijana Petir, Pina Picierno, João Pimenta Lopes, Terry Reintke, Jordi Sebastià, Michaela Šojdrová, Ernest Urtasun, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Anna Záborská, Jana Žitňanská
Substitutes present for the final vote	Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Kostadinka Kuneva, Constance Le Grip, Evelyn Regner, Marc Tarabella
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Julia Reid, Marco Zanni