

Women and science

European Parliament resolution of 21 May 2008 on women and science (2007/2206(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Council Resolution of 20 May 1999 on women and science¹,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 26 June 2001 on science and society and on women in science²,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 27 November 2003 on equal access to and participation of women and men in the knowledge society for growth and innovation³,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 18 April 2005 on reinforcing human resources in science and technology in the European Research Area,
- having regard to Decision No 1982/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (2007-2013)⁴ (FP7),
- having regard to Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions⁵,
- having regard to the Commission Communication of 4 December 2001 entitled 'Science and Society Action Plan' (COM(2001)0714),
- having regard to the Commission staff working document entitled 'Women and Science: Excellence and Innovation - Gender Equality in Science' (SEC(2005)0370),
- having regard to the Commission Green Paper entitled 'The European Research Area: New Perspectives' (COM(2007)0161) and the accompanying staff working document (SEC(2007)0412),
- having regard to its resolution of 3 February 2000 on the communication from the Commission entitled: 'Women and science - Mobilising women to enrich European research'⁶,

¹ OJ C 201, 16.7.1999, p. 1.

² OJ C 199, 14.7.2001, p. 1.

³ OJ C 317, 30.12.2003, p. 6.

⁴ OJ L 412, 30.12.2006, p. 1.

⁵ OJ L 269, 5.10.2002, p. 15.

⁶ OJ C 309, 27.10.2000, p. 57.

- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2004 on reconciling professional, family and private lives¹,
 - having regard to the Commission Communication of 1 March 2006 entitled 'A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010' (COM(2006)0092) and to its relevant resolution of 13 March 2007²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 19 June 2007 on a regulatory framework for measures enabling young women in the European Union to combine family life with a period of studies³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2007 on equality between women and men in the European Union - 2007⁴,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (A6-0165/2008),
- A. whereas research represents a crucial sector for the economic development of the European Union, and whereas the European Union needs to recruit 700 000 additional researchers as part of the fulfilment of the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment,
 - B. whereas female researchers are in a minority within the European Union, comprising an average of 35 % of researchers working in the government and higher education sectors and only 18 % of researchers working in the private sector,
 - C. whereas it is commonly accepted that diversity increases creativity in the business environment and this could be said to be true for research too,
 - D. whereas the percentage of women in the top grades of academia rarely exceeds 20 %, and men are three times more likely than women to obtain professorships or equivalent posts,
 - E. whereas sex-disaggregated data on researchers by qualification, field of science and age remain scarcely available, even in Member States,
 - F. whereas female researchers experience more difficulty in reconciling working and family life than male researchers,
 - G. whereas the dearth of women in scientific leadership positions remains significant,
 - H. whereas the representation of women in university decision-making bodies is not high enough to ensure the implementation of a gender-balanced policy,
 - I. whereas in a majority of countries the share of women on scientific boards has not reached parity,

¹ OJ C 102 E, 28.4.2004, p. 492.

² OJ C 301 E, 13.12.2007, p. 56.

³ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0265.

⁴ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0423.

- J. whereas one of the priority areas for EU action referred to in the above-mentioned Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010 is equal representation in decision making, including a target of 25 % of women in leading positions in public-sector research, to be met by 2010,
 - K. whereas the European Research Council (ERC) has not achieved a gender balance with only 5 women out of 22 in the ERC Scientific Council,
 - L. whereas, even though women make up more than 50 % of EU students and achieve 43 % of EU doctoral degrees, they hold, on average, only 15 % of senior academic posts and thereby have considerably less influence with regard to decision-making positions in research,
 - M. whereas the Commission report of 2008 entitled 'Mapping the Maze: Getting More Women to the Top in Research' shows that although transparent and fair evaluation and promotion procedures are necessary instruments, they alone are not sufficient: a change of culture is required to improve the gender balance in decision making in research,
 - N. whereas FP7 does not require mandatory gender action plans for project proposals,
 - O. whereas studies show that existing systems of evaluation and recruitment are not gender neutral,
1. Draws the attention of the Member States to the fact that education systems in the European Union continue to sustain gender stereotypes, in particular in areas of research such as the natural sciences;
 2. Believes that it is of the utmost importance to promote science as an interesting field for both sexes from early on; urges that this be taken into account when planning educational material and training teachers; encourages universities and faculties to analyse their entrance selection systems in order to identify possible implicit gender discrimination and correct the selection system accordingly;
 3. Notes that an excessively high proportion of female scientists give up their careers at some point; considers that this pattern, which has often been described as the 'leaking pipeline' model, needs to be analysed on the basis of various models including the 'push and pull factors' model; calls on the competent authorities to take account of various factors such as working environment, occupational stereotypes, competition, mobility requirements and family responsibilities when formulating possible solutions;
 4. Notes that the conventional approach to evaluating 'excellence' and 'performance', inter alia as regards number of publications, may not be gender neutral, but is restrictive and fails to take account of the resources available, such as funds, space, equipment and staff, and of the qualities essential in any researcher, such as the ability to organise and hold together a research team or to train young members of the team;
 5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take due account, in the definitions of excellence and a 'good researcher', of the differences between typical male and female scientific careers; stresses that female researchers also contribute to the world of research with different perspectives and choices of research topics;

6. Regrets that the breaks that women take in scientific careers for family reasons have a negative impact on their career opportunities, as most male colleagues do not take breaks and thus can achieve comparative positions at a younger age and gain an advantage in their further careers; asks, therefore, that age be taken into account as a criterion for excellence together with family situation, including the number of the researcher's dependants; calls, furthermore, for all EU research bodies and universities to set up grants for doctoral studies in accordance with national maternity leave provisions;
7. Points out that age limits for the award of grants adversely affect young people looking after dependants, who are, for the most part, women; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to consider, in such circumstances, legislative measures to correct that anomaly, such as adding one year to the deadline for applications for each year that a dependant is looked after;
8. Notes that mobility is one of the crucial ways of developing and assuring research career advancement and notes that this can be difficult to reconcile with family life and that appropriate policy measures should therefore be taken to make it more viable;
9. Stresses the role of infrastructure in facilitating a sustainable work-life balance, as well as the importance of enhancing the security of scientific careers;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve the situation by means of integration of the family angle through possibilities for flexible working hours, improved child-care facilities and social security provision accessibility across the borders; calls for parental leave conditions that genuinely allow men and women freedom of choice; stresses that reconciling work and family life is the responsibility of both men and women;
11. Notes that the Commission report of 2008 concludes that top-level commitment is vital for achieving gender equality in research, and that such a commitment must be expressed at national and institutional level;
12. Calls on the Member States to analyse the factors discouraging women's presence in senior posts in universities and education authorities, seriously reducing their influence in decision-making in research within the European Union, and to propose appropriate solutions;
13. Encourages universities, research institutes and private businesses to adopt and enforce equality strategies in their organisations and to conduct gender impact evaluation in their decision-making processes;
14. Calls on the Commission for awareness-raising actions in the scientific community, as well as among policy makers on the issue of equal opportunities in science and research;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States for more transparent recruitment processes and for an obligation to ensure gender balance in evaluation panels, selection and all other committees, as well as nominated panels and committees with a non-binding target of at least 40 % women and at least 40 % men;
16. Criticises the unambitious and insufficient EU target of 25% of women in leading positions in public-sector research and reminds the Commission and the Member States that gender parity implies at least 40% female representation;

17. Calls on the Commission to ensure that attention is paid to the participation of women in scientific research programmes by providing targeted gender-awareness training for those in decision-making positions, those sitting on advisory boards and evaluation panels, those drafting invitations to tender as well as tenders, and those leading contract negotiations;
18. Calls on the Commission to ensure that in tenders submitted under FP7 a balanced representation of men and women is assessed positively; urges Member States to make the same arrangements in their national and regional programmes;
19. Considers gender action plans within the proposal and evaluation stage of FP7 to be an essential part of the overall gender mainstreaming strategy and gender equality policy of the European Union; finds, therefore, that they should remain an integral part of EU research funding;
20. Firmly believes that specific recruitment, training and public relations measures need to be introduced in order to promote and encourage greater participation on the part of women in fields such as technology, physics, engineering, computer science and other domains;
21. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take positive action to encourage female researchers and further develop support and mentoring schemes, as well as promotion policies with clear objectives; notes that the development of support structures for career guidance and the provision of advice addressed, inter alia, to female scientists would produce particularly positive results;
22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to introduce effective policies to eliminate the gender pay gap; notes that in the field of science the principle of equal pay should also apply to scholarships and grants;
23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide for research funds targeted at women to counter the underfunding of women in research;
24. Stresses the importance of encouraging girls to take up scientific careers and suggests that the Commission and the Member States do so by promoting female researchers as role models and adopting and implementing other measures conducive to achieving this aim;
25. Encourages Member States to promote awareness-raising actions to inform and encourage girls to pursue scientific and technological university studies and degrees; encourages Member States to improve knowledge-sharing processes, since very different patterns of educational choices are available in the different Member States;
26. Draws attention to the need for special programmes at universities increasing young girls' and women's interest in starting scientific careers;
27. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to set up programmes for coaching and supporting young female scientists in participating in research programmes and grant applications in order to help them to stay in academia and research;
28. Welcomes the activities carried out by NGOs and agencies at European and national level which aim to enhance the participation of women in science and increase the number of female scientists in decision-making positions;

29. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen networking further among female scientists at national, regional and EU level, because networking has been identified as an essential tool by which to empower women, in order to attract more women to scientific careers, and encourage female scientists to participate in the policy debate and enhance their professional advancement;
30. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States.