

Equality between women and men — 2008

European Parliament resolution of 3 September 2008 on Equality between women and men - 2008 (2008/2047(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3(2) and 141 of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the Commission's report of 23 January 2008 on equality between women and men - 2008 (COM(2008)0010) ("the Commission report on equality"), and the annual reports of previous years (COM(2001)0179, COM(2002)0258, COM(2003)0098, COM(2004)0115, COM(2005)0044, COM(2006)0071 and COM(2007)0049),
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission of 1 March 2006 entitled 'A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010' (COM(2006)0092),
- having regard to Council Decision 2001/51/EC of 20 December 2000 establishing a Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005)¹
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund², in particular Article 16(1) thereof,
- having regard to the European Pact for Gender Equality adopted by the Brussels European Council of 23 and 24 March 2006,
- having regard to the common declaration adopted on 4 February 2005 by Member State ministers responsible for gender equality policies,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2004 on reconciling professional, family and private lives³,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 October 2006 on women's immigration: the role and the place of immigrant women in the European Union⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 April 2007 on the situation of women with disabilities in the European Union⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2007 on a roadmap for equality between women

¹ OJ L 17, 19.1.2001, p.22.

² OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p.25.

³ OJ C 102 E, 28.4.2004, p. 492.

⁴ OJ C 313 E, 20.12.2006, p.118.

⁵ OJ C 74 E, 20.3.2008, p.742.

and men (2006-2010)¹,

- 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 studies²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2007 on equality between women and men in the European Union - 2007³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2008 on the role of women in industry⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2008 on the situation of women in rural areas of the EU⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2008 on the particular situation of women in prison and the impact of the imprisonment of parents on social and family life⁶,
 - having regard to the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for women and men and its opinion on the gender pay gap, adopted on 22 March 2007,
 - having regard to the Framework of actions on gender equality adopted by the European social partners on 22 March 2005,
 - 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 opinions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0325/2008),
- A. whereas equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the EU, recognised by the Treaty establishing the European Community and by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; whereas in spite of the significant progress made in this field, many inequalities between women and men remain,
- B. whereas violence against women is a major hindrance to equality between women and men and is one of the most widespread human rights violations, knowing no geographical, economic, or social limits; whereas the number of women who are victims of violence is alarming,
- C. whereas the term “violence against women” is to be understood as any act of gender-based violence which results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm to or suffering of women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or the arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life,
- D. whereas trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation is an unacceptable violation of

¹ OJ C 301 E, 13.12.2007, p.56.

² OJ C 146 E, 12.6.2008, p.112.

³ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2007)0423.

⁴ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0019.

⁵ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0094.

⁶ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0102.

human rights, and is a modern form of slavery closely linked to other forms of criminality which significantly undermines all efforts for achieving equality between women and men,

- E. whereas the promotion of a flexible enterprise policy on the labour market must not focus primarily on the requirements of companies or public administrations, but must first and foremost take as its starting point the time that women and men need to be able to take seriously their respective duties within their families,
- F. whereas neither specific gender guidelines nor the equal opportunities pillar remains in the European employment strategy,
- G. whereas gender gaps in employment indicate persistence of both qualitative and quantitative disparities between women and men,
- H. whereas the pay gap has remained steady at 15% since 2003 and has narrowed by only one percentage point since 2000,
- I. whereas sectoral and occupational segregation between women and men is not diminishing and is even increasing in certain countries,
- J. whereas women's participation in decision making is a decisive indicator of equality between women and men; whereas the presence of female managers in companies and universities remains slight and the number of female politicians and researchers is rising only very slowly,
- K. whereas the stereotypes which still exist with regard to the educational and occupational options available to women help to perpetuate inequalities,
- L. whereas the Lisbon targets on generating growth and promoting the social market economy can be met only by making full use of the significant potential of women in the labour market,
- M. whereas there is a risk of 'enforced' part-time work, particularly for women, a choice often forced on them by a lack of affordable childcare facilities,
- N. whereas a number of challenges and difficulties affect women more than men, notably quality of employment, the situation of 'helping' spouses in areas such as agriculture or fisheries and small family businesses, health and safety at work and maternity protection, as well as their being at a higher risk of poverty,
- O. whereas, for both men and women, employment rates are lower in rural areas, and, in addition, a lot of women are never active in the official labour market and, therefore, are neither registered as unemployed nor included in unemployment statistics, which leads to particular financial and legal problems in relation to the right to maternity and sick leave, the acquisition of pension rights and access to social security, as well as problems in the event of divorce; whereas rural areas are badly affected by the lack of high-quality employment opportunities,
- P. whereas the conditions of some groups of women who often face several combined difficulties and risks as well as double discrimination – in particular disabled women, women with dependants, elderly women, minority and immigrant women and women

prisoners – show signs of deterioration,

- Q. whereas gaps between women and men persist in all other aspects of work quality, e.g. reconciling professional and private life, working arrangements which do not fully exploit people's skills and in the field of health and safety at work; whereas the employment rate for women with dependent children is only 62.4%, compared with 91.4% for men; whereas women's participation in the labour market is still largely characterised by a high and increasing share of part-time work - 31.4% for women in the EU-27 in 2007 compared to only 7.8% for men - and 76.5 % of all part-time workers are women; whereas temporary employment contracts are also more common for women (15.1%, one percentage point more than for men); whereas long-term unemployment is still much more common among women (4.5%) than men (3.5%),
 - R. whereas the risk of falling into poverty is higher for women than for men, especially for the over-65s (21%, 5 percentage points more than men),
 - S. whereas reconciling professional, family and private lives remains an unresolved issue for women as well as for men,
 - T. whereas the social partners play an important role in defining and effectively implementing actions for gender equality at European, national, regional, sectoral and corporate levels,
 - U. whereas the sharing of family and domestic duties between men and women, not least by developing the use of parental leave and paternity leave, is a precondition for promoting and achieving gender equality; and whereas not counting periods of maternity and parental leave towards aggregate working times is discriminatory and places women in a worse situation on the labour market,
 - V. whereas access to services for the care of children, the elderly and other dependants is essential for equal participation of women and men in the labour market, education and training,
 - W. whereas the Structural Funds regulations state that the Member States and the Commission shall ensure that equality between women and men and the integration of the gender perspective are promoted during the various stages of implementation of the funds,
1. Welcomes the above-mentioned Commission report on equality and reiterates the two-fold nature of policy on equal opportunities for women and men at EU level: on the one hand ensuring equality between women and men in all policy areas (gender mainstreaming) and, on the other hand, targeted measures to curb discrimination against women, including awareness-raising campaigns, exchange of best practice, dialogue with citizens and public-private partnership initiatives;
 2. Stresses the importance of combating violence against women to achieving equality between women and men; calls on the Member States and the Commission, therefore, to undertake concerted action in the field; urges the Commission to consider the possibility of new measures on combating violence against women;
 3. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to combine their efforts in fighting organised crime and trafficking networks, and to adopt and strengthen legislative, administrative, educational, social and cultural measures that discourage demand for

prostitution;

4. Calls on the Member States to urgently ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings;
5. Considers overall participation of women in decision making at local, national and EU levels to be insufficient; invites the Commission, Member States and political parties, therefore, to consider action to improve the situation; notes in this regard the positive effects of the use of electoral quotas on the representation of women;
6. Points out the correlation between participation of women in politics and decision making and their involvement in NGOs and civil society activities; urges the Commission and the Member States, therefore, to support actions promoting that involvement;
7. Stresses the importance of women's active involvement in trade unions with tasks centred on protecting women at the workplace and granting them the rights to which they are entitled;
8. Notes the importance to women's empowerment of their control over their sexual and reproductive rights; therefore supports measures and actions to improve women's access to sexual and reproductive health services and to raise their awareness of their rights and of available services;
9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take the necessary measures to implement gender mainstreaming in all social, employment and social security policies, in particular in the flexicurity strategy, and to combat all forms of discrimination;
10. Supports the measures promoted by the European Social Fund and the PROGRESS programme for 2007-2013, which improve the situation of women in the labour market and help eliminate discrimination;
11. Is concerned about the lack of progress as regards the gender pay gap between women and men over the last few years; urges the Commission and the Member States, therefore, to assess the strategies and actions in this area and to establish, where necessary in cooperation with the social partners, any new measures or new approaches in the implementation of existing measures, to improve the situation; supports, in this regard, the suggestion of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities to render existing European legislation on the subject more stringent by inserting a requirement for employers to conduct wage audits and draw up action plans in order to close the pay gap; stresses the need for concerted action, especially in the context of the new cycle of the European Strategy for Growth and Jobs, and for common principles of flexicurity;
12. Is concerned about women being disadvantaged in the labour market, which leads to them accumulating fewer individual rights to pensions and other social welfare payments, especially in systems where entitlement is based predominantly on an individual's record of employment contributions or earnings; for this reason, calls upon the Member States to take effective action designed to enforce the rules on welfare and employment and to make jobs which respect the rights of employees available in the various activity sectors, thereby ensuring that workers (in particular women) earn decent wages and are entitled to health and safety at work, to social protection and to trade-union freedom, as a contribution to eliminating discrimination between men and women at work;

13. Calls on the Member States to support the Commission in its monitoring of the implementation of national measures, the objective of which is to assess observance of the principle of equality, particularly as regards legal entitlements and pension and social security regimes;
14. Calls on the Community institutions and the Member States to make 22 February 'International Equal Pay Day';
15. Is concerned about the persistent discrepancy between women's and men's education level on the one hand, where women's performance is better than men's, and the situation in the labour market on the other hand, where women earn lower wages, are in less secure jobs and experience slower career progress than men; urges the Commission and Member States to explore the reasons for and find solutions to this situation;
16. Recommends that Member States actively promote equal treatment of pupils and take steps to combat the segregation of work still existing in the education sector, in which the percentage of women teachers at the pre-school and primary levels is well above the percentage in secondary education, a more markedly male preserve with more to offer in terms of recognition, pay and social status;
17. Proposes that the Commission consider adopting measures to encourage women and men to study scientific and technological subjects, so as to increase the supply of professionals in the corresponding sector and meet the manifest demand;
18. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take further measures to improve women's access to and participation in the labour market, especially in sectors such as high-technology, research, science and engineering, in which they are still under-represented, and to improve the quality of employment of women, in particular by means of lifelong learning and education programmes at every level; urges the Commission and Member States to make use of the European Structural Funds to achieve this;
19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to give consideration to the situation of spouses helping in handicrafts, trade, agriculture, fisheries and small family businesses, both from the gender equality perspective and taking into account the fact that women are in a more vulnerable position than men; calls on the Commission, as a matter of urgency, to submit a proposal for revision of Directive 86/613/EEC on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood¹, with a view to eliminating indirect discrimination, introducing a positive requirement of equal treatment and improving the legal status of assisting spouses;
20. Calls on the Member States to develop the legal construct of shared ownership, in order to ensure full recognition of women's rights in the agricultural sector, appropriate protection in the field of social security and recognition of their work;
21. Encourages the Member States to promote female entrepreneurship in the industrial sector and to provide financial support and vocational guidance structures for women setting up companies, as well as the appropriate training;

¹ OJ L 359, 19.12.1986, p. 56.

22. Calls on the Member States to pay particular attention to the availability of maternity facilities for self-employed women;
23. Calls on the Commission and Member States to take particular note of the situation of the increasing numbers of workers who are formally self-employed, but can in reality be categorised as 'economically dependent workers';
24. Calls on the Member States to acknowledge companies that take action to promote equality between women and men and facilitate work-life balance, in order to foster the spread of good practices in this area;
25. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to give priority to and take particular note of more vulnerable groups of women, in particular disabled women, women with dependants, elderly women, minority and immigrant women and women prisoners, and to develop targeted measures to meet their needs;
26. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to adopt and implement the necessary measures to support women with disabilities so that they may progress in those areas of social life and in the world of work, culture and politics in which they are still under-represented;
27. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote immigrant women's access to education and employment by adopting measures to combat the two-fold discrimination suffered by immigrant women in the labour market, to create favourable conditions for their access to the labour market, to balance their professional and private life, and to ensure adequate vocational training;
28. Welcomes the consultation between the Commission and the social partners aimed at improving the legislative and non-legislative frameworks for reconciling professional, family and private lives; is looking forward to an analysis of the results of that consultation and to proposals emerging from it, in particular proposals relating to maternity leave and its inclusion in aggregate working time, parental leave, paternity leave, adoption leave and care-for-dependant leave; considers, moreover, that the Framework Agreement on Parental Leave could be improved in respect of the following points: providing incentives for fathers to take parental leave, improving the employment rights of workers who take parental leave, making the leave arrangements more flexible, increasing the duration of parental leave and pay during such leave;
29. Points out that any policy on reconciling work and family life must be based on the principle of free personal choice and adapted to different life cycles;
30. Calls on the Member States to put forward specific measures to combat inequalities between women and men caused by interrupted patterns of employment resulting in particular from maternity leave or leave to care for dependants, and to reduce their negative effects on careers, wages and pension entitlements;
31. Notes that reconciling work, private and family lives is one of the keys to increasing employment and calls on the Commission to gather and disseminate best practice regarding an effective work-life balance and greater involvement of men in family life;
32. Urges the Commission and the Member States to promote male involvement in the

implementation of gender equality policies, especially in the field of reconciling work, private and family lives;

33. Asks the Member States and regional and local authorities to improve the availability, quality and accessibility of childcare services and care services for dependent persons in line with the Barcelona objectives, and to ensure that the availability of these services is compatible with full-time working schedules of women and men with responsibility for children and dependent persons;
34. Calls on those responsible inside firms to include flexible family policy measures in their workforce-management plan to make it easier for employees to return to work after a career break;
35. Draws the attention of the Commission and the Member States to the feminisation of poverty, at a time when women, especially elderly women and single mothers, are at risk of exclusion and poverty, and urges them to develop measures to prevent this tendency;
36. Asks the Commission and the Member States to develop training and implementation tools to allow all stakeholders to take on board in their respective areas of competence a perspective based on equal opportunities for women and men, including the assessment of the specific impact of policies on women and men;
37. Urges the Member States and regional and local authorities to ensure the effective use of existing tools, such as the manuals for mainstreaming equal opportunities for women and men in employment policies produced by the Commission;
38. Urges Member States to provide appropriate training in gender mainstreaming to officials responsible for implementing Community programmes at national, regional and local levels;
39. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to devise a number of quantity and quality indicators, as well as gender-based statistics which are reliable, comparable and available when needed, to be used during the follow-up of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs, in order to take into account the gender dimension and to ensure the appropriate implementation and follow-up of policies;
40. Welcomes the establishment of the European Institute for Gender Equality and the appointment of the members of the Management Board which has provided the Institute with a decision-making body; is concerned, however, at the delay in recruitment of an Institute director and urges the Commission to remedy the situation;
41. Asks the Commission, with the help of the European Institute for Gender Equality, to include facts and statistics from candidate and potential candidate countries in future annual reports on equality between women and men;
42. Calls on the Member States to encourage the population as a whole to play sports and lead healthy lives, bearing in mind that, where sport is concerned, women's participation rates are lower;
43. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.