



Tackling the pay gap between men and women

The European Parliament adopted a legislative initiative report recommending a revision of existing legislation on equal pay. In the European Union, women earn on average 15% less and up to 25 % less in the private sector. In spite of the legislation in force for more than thirty years, the pay gap between women and men has been persistent, still varying between 4 and 25 % among the Member States with no narrowing trend, states the report adopted by 590 votes four, 23 against and 46 abstentions.

EP sends strong signal to Commission

The report was adopted under a special procedure (rule 39 of the rules of procedure) where the European Parliament calls on the Commission to bring forward a legislative proposal and where the report must obtain an absolute majority to be adopted) MEPs request the Commission to submit to Parliament by 31 December 2009, a legislative proposal on the revision of the existing legislation, following different recommendations.

More transparency

The report suggests the introduction of obligatory regular pay audits for enterprises and the publication of their results. Recommendations also include a clear definition of concepts such as gender pay gap and direct and indirect discrimination as well as establishing job evaluations complying with the principle of equality between men and women available for all stakeholders.

Applying existing legislation and sanctions

The whole problem of pays gap could not be solved by legislation alone and the Commission and Member States should reinforce the existing legislation with appropriate types of sanctions, underlines the report.

MEPs propose to conduct a study on the possibility and effectiveness of launching possible sanctions such as penalties including the compensation of victims, administrative fines, disqualification from benefits and subsidies for employers and the publication of offenders.

Equality bodies should also play a special role by influencing more effectively and more independently the application of gender equality legislation.

N.B. :

Rule 39 : Initiative pursuant to Article 192 of the EC Treaty 1. Parliament may request the Commission, pursuant to Article 192, second paragraph, of the EC Treaty, to submit to it any appropriate proposal for the adoption of a new act or the amendment of an existing act, by adopting a resolution on the basis of an

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own-initiative report from the committee responsible. The resolution shall be adopted by a majority of the component Members of Parliament. Parliament may, at the same time, fix a deadline for the submission of such a proposal.

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