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How marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men

European Parliament resolution of 3 September 2008 on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men (2008/2038(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the EC Treaty, in particular Articles 2, 3(2) and 152 thereof,
- having regard to the Community acquis in the field of women's rights and gender equality,
- having regard to the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing on 15 September 1995 and its resolution of 18 May 2000 on the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action¹,
- having regard to Council Directive 89/552/EEC of 3 October 1989 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive)²,
- having regard to Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services³,
- having regard to the Commission's roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010 (COM(2006)0092) and the related impact assessment (SEC(2006)0275),
- having regard to its resolution of 25 July 1997 on discrimination against women in advertising⁴,
- having regard to Resolution 1557 (2007) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, entitled Image of women in advertising,
- having regard to the European Pact for Gender Equality adopted by the Brussels European Council of 23 and 24 March 2006,
- 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 (A6-0199/2008),

¹ OJ C 59, 23.2.2001, p. 258.

² OJ L 298, 17.10.1989, p 23.

³ OJ L 373, 21.2.2004, p 37.

⁴ OJ C 304, 6.10.1997, p. 60.

- A. whereas socialisation (through school, the family and the socio-cultural environment) is a process that forges identity, values, beliefs and attitudes that give the individual a place and role in the society in which he/she grows up; whereas the concept of identification is key to understanding how this process works,
- B. whereas more should be done to promote reasonable and responsible use of television and new technologies both at school and at home, from an early age onwards,
- C. whereas advertising which conveys discriminatory and/or degrading messages based on gender and all forms of gender stereotyping are obstacles to a modern and egalitarian society,
- D. whereas stereotypes may contribute to behaviour that is a vector for identification,
- E. whereas advertising and marketing reflect culture, and also contribute to its creation,
- F. whereas advertising is a component part of the market economy and one of the aspects of reality with which everyone is confronted in daily life,
- G. whereas advertising can sometimes present a caricatured view of women's and men's lives,
- H. whereas gender discrimination in the media is still widespread; whereas gender stereotyping in advertising and the media can be considered part of this discrimination,
- I. whereas gender stereotyping in advertising thus echoes the unequal distribution of power between the sexes,
- J. whereas gender stereotyping must be opposed at all levels of society in order to foster equality and cooperation between women and men in both the private and public domains,
- K. whereas, right from the first years of a child's socialisation, gender stereotyping may contribute to the gender discrimination which reinforces the perpetuation of lifelong inequalities between women and men and the emergence of gender-specific clichés,
- L. whereas gender stereotyping is counterproductive and in the labour market contributes to gender divisions in professions, with women generally earning less than men,
- M. whereas society as a whole has to be involved in efforts to avoid the perpetuation of gender stereotyping; whereas responsibility for so doing should be shared by all,
- N. whereas the barriers preventing positive images of men and women from being conveyed in all social situations need to be removed,
- O. whereas children are a particularly vulnerable group that places its trust not only in authority but also in characters from myths, TV programmes, picture-books, educational materials, TV games, advertisements for toys, etc.; whereas children learn by imitation and mimick what they have just experienced; whereas for that reason gender stereotyping in advertising influences individual development and accentuates the perception that a person's gender dictates what is possible and what is not,
- P. whereas advertising through different types of media is part of our daily lives, whereas it is of particular importance that advertising through media be subject to existing ethically

and/or legally binding rules and/or codes of conduct to prevent adverts communicating discriminatory or degrading messages based on gender stereotypes as well as incitement to violence,

- Q. whereas responsible advertising can have a positive influence over society's perceptions of issues such as 'body image', 'gender roles' and 'normality'; whereas advertising can be an effective tool in challenging and tackling stereotypes,
1. Emphasises the importance of giving women and men the same opportunities to develop as individuals;
 2. Notes the continued widespread existence of male and female stereotypes despite various Community programmes to promote gender equality;
 3. Notes that further research would help to elucidate any link between gender stereotyping in advertising and gender inequality;
 4. Calls on the Council, Commission and Member States to exploit, and disseminate, the abovementioned research and its results;
 5. Emphasises the importance of Member States honouring the commitments made in the above-mentioned European Pact for Gender Equality;
 6. Calls on the Council, Commission and Member States to adhere to the guidelines adopted through various Community programmes, such as EQUAL, and guidelines focussing on gender equality;
 7. Calls on the Council and Commission to monitor the implementation of existing provisions of Community law on sex discrimination and incitement to hatred on the grounds of sex;
 8. Calls on the Council, Commission and Member States to develop awareness-raising actions against sexist insults or degrading images of women and men in advertising and marketing;
 9. Calls on the Member States to study and report on the image of women and men in advertising and marketing;
 10. Stresses that stereotypes in advertising on children's television programmes are a particular problem because of their potential impact on gender socialisation and, subsequently, children's views of themselves, of their family members and of the outside world;
 11. Notes that efforts to combat gender stereotypes in the media and advertising should be accompanied by education strategies and measures to cultivate awareness from an early age and to develop critical faculties from adolescence onwards;
 12. Stresses the fundamental role which should be played by the education system in developing children's critical faculties with regard to images and the media in general, in order to prevent the unwelcome effects of the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in marketing and advertising;
 13. Notes the need to challenge traditional gender roles in order to achieve gender equality;

14. Draws attention in particular to the need to eliminate from textbooks, toys, video and computer games, the internet and the new information and communications technologies (ICTs), and from advertising through different types of media, messages which are contrary to human dignity and which convey gender stereotypes;
15. Notes with extreme concern the advertising of sexual services which reinforces stereotypes of women as objects, in publications, such as local newspapers, which are readily visible and available to children;
16. Notes the need to conduct continuous training for and in collaboration with media professionals, and awareness training for society on the negative effects of gender stereotypes;
17. Draws attention to the fact that the use of television and new technologies is increasing among children and adolescents, that such use starts at a very early age, and that unsupervised television viewing is on the rise;
18. Notes that marketing and advertising portrayals of the ideal body image can adversely affect the self-esteem of women and men, particularly teenagers and those susceptible to eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa; calls on advertisers to consider carefully their use of extremely thin women to advertise products;
19. Calls on the Member States to ensure by appropriate means that marketing and advertising guarantee respect for human dignity and the integrity of the person, are neither directly nor indirectly discriminatory nor contain any incitement to hatred based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, and do not contain material which, judged in its context, sanctions, promotes or glamorises violence against women;
20. Recognises the work already done by media regulators in some Member States to explore the effects of gender stereotyping and encourages regulators in all Member States to share best practice in this area;
21. Reminds the Commission that the abovementioned Council Directive 2004/113/EC, when first proposed by the Commission, also covered discrimination in the media; calls on the Commission to intensify its efforts against this discrimination;
22. Emphasises the need for positive examples (from a gender perspective) in the media and advertising world to show that change is possible and desirable; considers that Member States should formally establish awards given by advertisers to their peers, and by the public for advertising which best breaks with gender stereotypes and presents a positive or affirming image of women and men and of the relations between them;
23. Emphasises the need to disseminate the principles of gender equality through the media by means of publications and programmes, designed for different age groups, to popularise best practice and respect for gender differences;
24. Emphasises the need for an ongoing debate on marketing and advertising and their role in creating and perpetuating gender stereotypes;
25. Calls on the Member States to design and launch educational initiatives developed in a spirit of tolerance and eschewing all forms of stereotyping and to promote the culture of gender

equality by means of appropriate educational programmes;

26. Emphasises that gender stereotypes must be eliminated;

27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.