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Discrimination against young women and girls in the field of education

European Parliament resolution on educational discrimination against young women and girls (2006/2135(INI))

The European Parliament,

- reaffirming the principles laid down in Articles 2, 3(2), 13, 137(1)(i), and 141 of the Treaty establishing the European Community,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union proclaimed in 2000, and in particular Article 23 thereof,
- having regard to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 1950,
- having regard to the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948,
- having regard to the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular MDG3 on promoting gender equality and empowering women as a prerequisite to, among other things, achieving equality at all levels of education and in all areas of work,
- having regard to the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995, the Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted in Beijing and the subsequent outcome documents adopted at the successive UN Beijing + 5 and UN Beijing +10 Special Sessions on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration adopted on 9 June 2000 and the Platform for Action adopted on 11 March 2005,
- having regard to the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1999, which states that individuals or groups of individuals, under the jurisdiction of a state party, claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the convention by that state party may submit communications to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,
- having regard to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) Global Monitoring Reports on Education for All of 2003/2004, 2005 and 2006,
- having regard to the recommendations of the Council of Europe, and in particular its resolution and action plan adopted at the Sixth European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men held in Stockholm on 8 and 9 June 2006,
- having regard to the Recommendation 2006/143/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2006 on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education¹,

¹ OJ L 64, 4.3.2006, p. 60.

- having regard to the Council Recommendation 98/561/EC of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education¹,
 - having regard to its resolutions of 28 April 2005 on the situation of the Roma in the European Union² and of 1 June 2006 on the situation of Roma women in the European Union³,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 4 July 2006 entitled 'Towards an EU strategy on the Rights of the Child' (COM(2006)0367),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 1 March 2006 entitled 'Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010' (COM(2006)0092),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 1 June 2005 entitled 'Non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all - A framework strategy' (COM(2005)0224),
 - having regard to the Commission communications of 19 February 2004 (COM(2004)0115) and of 14 February 2005 (COM(2005)0044) on equality between men and women,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 5 February 2003 entitled 'The role of the universities in the Europe of knowledge' (COM(2003)0058),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 7 June 2000 entitled 'Towards a Community framework strategy on gender equality' (2001-2005) (COM(2000)0335),
 - having regard to the Declaration made by the European Union Ministers responsible for Gender Equality Policy at the Conference of Ministers of Gender Equality held in Luxembourg on 4 February 2005,
 - having regard to the Declaration on the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, signed in Sofia on 2 February 2005 by the Prime Ministers of the participating Central and South Eastern European States,
 - having regard to the Athens Declaration made at the 1992 European Summit on Women in Power, which states that 'women represent half the potential talent and skills of humanity'
 - having regard to the reports and speeches of the Committee on Culture and Education and of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality,
 - 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 (A6-0416/2006),
- A. whereas statistics from the Member States indicate that a lower proportion of women than men are obtaining postgraduate qualifications, and whereas it is reported that a lower number of women than men are undertaking lifelong learning on account of diverse gender-related restrictions,

¹ OJ L 270, 7.10.1998, p. 56.

² OJ C 45 E, 23.2.2006, p. 129.

³ OJ C 298 E, 8.12.2006, p. 283.

- B. whereas household and family tasks are still performed largely by women, and consequently the time available to them for further training and lifelong learning is limited,
- C. whereas access to education, and in particular higher education, is especially difficult for young people from low-income families, which leads to a reinforcement of the traditional preference for education for boys,
- D. whereas the significant progress made as regards gender equality in education mainly relates to positive quantitative developments, i.e. an increase in the numbers of women gaining access to all levels of education, without a corresponding qualitative development as regards the selection of courses of study and specialities, which results from social perceptions and the traditional roles of the sexes,
- E. whereas education is an important European value, a fundamental right, and a key instrument for social inclusion; whereas challenges and certain prejudices against educated women continue to exist in society, and whereas educated women often do not find opportunities to fulfil their potential in professional and public life,
- F. whereas in certain cultures traditional and religious prejudices still exist, restricting girls' and young women's access to education,
- G. whereas the media repeatedly perpetuates gender stereotypes and traditional images of women are thereby reinforced, rather than admirable examples worthy of imitation, such as Maria Skłodowska-Curie,
- H. whereas access to education for girls and young women from national minorities, and in particular from the Roma minority, or for girls and young women from immigrant groups is particularly limited and is often characterised by discrimination and segregation in schools, including in remedial learning programmes, which have limited resources available to them, unmotivated and untrained staff, poor infrastructure and inadequate educational programmes and testing methods,
- I. whereas many Member States lack adequately funded education budgets and at the same time most of the teaching is done by women,
 - 1. Points out that the education and training of girls and women is a human right and an essential element for the full enjoyment of all other social, economic, cultural and political rights;
 - 2. Welcomes the fact that an average of eight out of ten girls studying at higher education establishments in the Member States complete their studies and that statistics indicate that equal opportunities exist for both sexes in terms of obtaining higher education and indeed indicate a higher level of motivation among women when they are not restricted by reasons of gender;
 - 3. Points out that in education and research, women outnumber men as graduates (59%), yet their presence decreases consistently as they progress up the career ladder, from 43% of PhDs down to only 15% of full professors;
 - 4. Welcomes the fact that several practical steps have been taken as part of the UN Millennium Project to reduce gender inequality in access to education and that equal access to education for both sexes is being debated openly in the Member States;

5. Welcomes the reform of the university education system arising from the Lisbon strategy and relating in particular to lifelong learning, which provides young women with the opportunity to continue their education;
6. Welcomes the Commission's report on the quality of school education, published in 2000, which analyses 16 indicators, including access to education from the point of view of gender;
7. Welcomes the creation of an Institute for Gender Equality, whose activities should include monitoring the situation as regards access to education for both sexes in individual Member States and throughout the world;
8. Recommends that policy in the area of equal access to education be evaluated on the basis of an assessment of gender-differentiated statistics, so as better to highlight and resolve the inequalities that persist in gaining access to and obtaining certain higher academic qualifications, including at postgraduate level and in scientific research, as well as in the area of lifelong learning;
9. Calls on the Member States to facilitate access to education for women and men who are looking after children and for parents who have interrupted the process of obtaining a qualification in order to have children;
10. Recommends dialogue with the social partners, with a view to motivating them to create favourable conditions for improving access to education and lifelong learning for women who have interrupted their training and women who have few qualifications;
11. Refers to the fact that the discrepancy in pay between women and men remains at an unacceptably high level and shows no significant signs of being reduced; points out that on average women earn 15% less than men, which is the result both of non-compliance with equal pay legislation and a number of structural inequalities such as labour market segregation, differences in work patterns, access to education and training, biased evaluation and pay systems and stereotyping;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to use all available means to eliminate common stereotypes that discriminate against women in the workplace, something which is particularly in evidence in the field of science and technology, where women are very poorly represented, to pay particular attention to gender issues and to monitor and evaluate data regularly;
13. Calls on the Member States to encourage women's access to positions of responsibility and decision-making in public and private undertakings, paying particular attention to academic positions;
14. Encourages the Commission to promote the principles of equality and equal access to education for girls in its relations with third countries, and in particular in its neighbourhood and development aid policies;
15. Urges the Member States to strengthen the position of female teachers at higher levels of the education system and centres of decision-making on educational issues, where their male colleagues are still in the majority;
16. Stresses the need to reform the syllabus at all levels of education and the content of school textbooks; recommends that the training of teachers and of other educational

workers be directed towards fulfilling the requirements of a balanced gender policy and that gender policy issues form part of the training of teachers at teacher training and other faculties;

17. Recommends that the Commission and the Member States implement a policy for national, ethnic and cultural minorities, and not forgetting the Roma minority, which allows access to quality education and equal conditions in education for boys and girls, including preschool and zero grade programmes, paying particular attention to a multicultural approach that facilitates the integration of young women and girls from minorities and immigrant groups into the regular education system, with a view to combating double discrimination;
18. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the Member States to take all necessary action to protect the rights of immigrant women and immigrant girls and to combat the discrimination they face in their community of origin by rejecting all forms of cultural and religious relativism which could violate women's fundamental rights;
19. Recommends that the Member States support awareness-raising of equal access to education at all levels, particularly among vulnerable communities, with the objective of eliminating all forms of prejudice affecting girls' and young women's access to education;
20. Recommends to the Member States that they adapt their study programmes to the needs of young people with jobs, and of people, particularly girls and women, caring for small children or on maternity leave; considers that current technical possibilities make it possible for appropriate solutions to be found;
21. Calls for greater efforts to recognise cognitively gifted young individuals, in particular girls or young women, and those suffering from learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia and ADHD, and to provide better support for them;
22. Calls on the Member States to re-evaluate the testing methods used when placing children, especially Roma children, into remedial schools;
23. Welcomes the implementation and use of educational programmes financed by EU funds, and other sources including the not-for-profit sector, to benefit the education of girls and young women from socially disadvantaged families; welcomes in particular the use of existing programmes and support funds, as well as the search for new forms of funding; at the same time emphasises the need in all the Member States to invest much more in the education of young people, with a view to the future;
24. Proposes that the Member States make use of the gender budgeting instrument in their budget and thereby compensate gender-specific injustices, which will benefit the field of education above all;
25. Recommends that the Member States create and monitor national educational policies that enable all girls, as well as boys, to enter, remain in and complete compulsory schooling, ensuring that they remain in school until they have reached the minimum legal age to enter the labour market;
26. Points out the vital need for the accurate evaluation of statistical data on gender issues, as well as on other aspects of multiple discrimination such as ethnicity, particularly as there

is not always statistically differentiated data on gender relating to children and young people; recalls that this is one of the tasks of the new Institute for Gender Equality;

27. Calls on the Member States to encourage the positive presentation of men and women in the media, putting forward a dignified image of women and men, free from prejudiced and distorted concepts that end up detracting from or undervaluing one or both of the sexes;
28. Points out the need to adapt new technologies in the area of training to women's educational needs, for example distance learning using computer technology;
29. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to take steps to put an end to the digital divide between men and women as part of the Lisbon strategy, with the aim of extending the information society through measures to promote equality between men and women and actions to provide easier access for women, by boosting the acquisition of e-capacities, by carrying out programmes that provide for specific actions to include women from vulnerable groups and compensate for imbalances between urban and rural areas;
30. Recommends that the Member States develop more flexible adult education and lifelong learning programmes so that working women and mothers are able to continue their education in programmes that fit in with their schedules, thus allowing women to have increased access to education and the opportunity to participate in alternative educational programmes so that they may become more independent and are able to participate meaningfully in society, further promoting gender equality;
31. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.