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*Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality*

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## **DRAFT REPORT**

on equality between women and men in the European Union - 2011  
(2011/2244(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on equality between women and men in the European Union - 2011 (2011/2244(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Article 2 and Article 3(3), second subparagraph, of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979,
- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995 and to the subsequent outcome documents adopted at the United Nations Beijing+5 (2000), Beijing +10 (2005) and Beijing +15 (2010) special sessions,
- having regard to the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), adopted by the European Council in March 2011<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2010 entitled ‘A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men: A Women’s Charter’ (COM(2010)0078),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 February 2011 entitled ‘Report on the progress on equality between women and men in 2010’ (SEC(2010)0193),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 21 September 2010 entitled ‘Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015’ (COM(2010)0491),
- having regard to the EU Victims Package comprised of the Commission communications of 18 May 2011 entitled ‘Strengthening victims’ rights in the EU’ (COM (2011)274), ‘Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime’ (COM(2011)0275) and ‘Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters’ (COM(2011)0276),
- having regard to the Commission communication ‘EU 2020: a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Commission report of 3 October 2008 entitled ‘Implementation of the Barcelona objectives concerning childcare facilities for pre-school-age children’ (COM(2008)0638),

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<sup>1</sup> Annex to Council Conclusions of 7 March 2011.

- having regard to its resolution of 1 February 2010 on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2009<sup>1</sup> and of 8 February 2011 on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2010<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2011 on women and business leadership<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 18 March 2011 on priorities and outline of a new EU policy framework to fight violence against women<sup>4</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2011 on the face of female poverty in the European Union<sup>5</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0000/2011),
- A. whereas equality between men and women is a fundamental principle of the European Union, enshrined in the Treaty on European Union, and whereas the Union has set itself the specific task of mainstreaming gender equality in all its activities;
  - B. whereas at times of economic crisis, strengthening women’s position in the labour market and economic independence is not only a moral imperative, but also an economic necessity;
  - C. whereas initially the economic crisis mainly hit male employment, but cuts in public spending are expected to have a disproportionate impact on female employment, as many more women than men are employed in the public sector;
  - D. whereas budget cuts in social services, such as childcare, further hinder women’s participation in the labour market;
  - E. whereas access to capital is severely limited by the banking crisis, a problem that is likely to hit women entrepreneurs disproportionately, as women increasingly work as self-employed, so as to better combine work and family life;
  - F. whereas progress in achieving gender equality has been excruciatingly slow, in particular economic equality; whereas political leaders must do more than pay lip service to it, rather making it a priority in their economic strategies;
  - G. whereas on average 3 in 10 households in the European Union are single person households<sup>6</sup>, the majority of them comprising women living alone, and the percentage is

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<sup>1</sup> P7\_TA(2010)0021.

<sup>2</sup> P7\_TA(2011)0085.

<sup>3</sup> P7\_TA(2011)0330.

<sup>4</sup> P7\_TA(2011)0127.

<sup>5</sup> P7\_TA(2010)0086.

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat Population Census, and Schulz E. (2007) ‘Household patterns’, Research Note prepared for the demography network of the Social Situation Observatory of the European Commission, DIW Berlin Germany.

rising; whereas these households are more vulnerable and more at risk of poverty, in particular at times of economic adversity; whereas single person households in most Member States are treated unfavourably, both in absolute and relative terms, with regard to taxation, social security, housing, health care, insurance and pensions; whereas public policies should not penalise people for – voluntarily or involuntarily – living alone;

### **Equal economic independence**

1. Calls on the Member States to ensure that their marriage and divorce laws do not directly or indirectly constitute a financial ‘trap’ for the spouses, in particular women, and to ensure that young couples are fully aware and informed of the legal and financial implications of marriage and divorce;
2. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to elaborate proposals for the mutual recognition of civil unions and of same sex families across Europe between those countries which already have legislation in place, so as to ensure equal treatment with regard to work, taxation and social security, protecting the incomes of families and children;

### **Equal pay for equal work and work of equal value**

3. Notes that, despite countless campaigns, targets and measures in recent years, the gender pay gap remains stubbornly wide, women across the EU earn 17.5% less on average than men and there has only been a marginal reduction of the gender pay gap in the last few years;
4. Concerned that the economic crisis and budget cuts will exacerbate the problem, as women will be disproportionately affected, calls on Member States’ governments as well as on social partners to devise an action plan and concrete, ambitious targets;

### **Equality in decision-making**

5. Considers that making the most of Europe’s female talent in the workforce is not just good for business – it also benefits the economy and society as a whole: women represent 60% of university graduates, but continue to be under-represented in economic decision-making posts;
6. Recalls that, within the EU, on average only 12% of the executives of the major listed companies are women, with only 3% female chairs<sup>1</sup>;
7. Calls on the Commission to present, as soon as possible, comprehensive current data on female representation within all types of companies in the EU and on the compulsory and non-compulsory measures taken by the business sector as well as those recently adopted by the Member States with a view to increasing such representation, following this exercise, and if the steps taken by companies and the Member States are found to be inadequate, to propose legislation, including quotas, by 2012 to increase female representation in corporate management bodies to 30% by 2015 and to 40% by 2020,

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers vary by country, 25% of female executives in Sweden and Finland to 2% in Malta.

while taking account of the Member States' responsibilities and of their economic, structural (i.e. company-size related), legal and regional specificities;

8. Refers to the successful examples of Norway, Spain, Germany, Italy and France;
9. Points out that the use of electoral quotas has positive effects on women's representation;

### **Dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence**

10. Calls on the Commission to include homophobic and transphobic violence and harassment in its action programmes against gender-based violence;
11. Points out that domestic violence claims many deadly victims across the EU each year, so it should be treated as a public security issue rather than as a private, domestic issue;
12. Notes in this context the EU Victims Package; calls on Member States to act specifically against honour killings, Female Genital Mutilation and other forms of violence and violation of individual rights under the pretext of culture or religion;
13. Points out that economic, social and sexual autonomy are important preconditions for reducing gender violence;
14. Reiterated its position on sexual and reproductive health rights, as stated in its resolutions of 1 February 2010 and 8 February 2011 on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2009 and 2010; expresses concern in this respect about recent restrictions on access to sexual and reproductive health services in some Member States, in particular safe and legal abortion;
15. Expresses concern over the rising incidence of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases, in particular amongst women; urges the Commission to explicitly include in its prevention strategies sex education and access to condoms;

### **Gender equality beyond the Union**

16. Calls for human rights for women to be given the highest priority in the EU's external policies;
17. Though welcoming the moves towards more democracy and freedom in countries of the Southern Mediterranean, is concerned that women's rights may actually emerge weakened from the Arab Spring; calls for specific support measures for gender equality;
18. Notes that this year the world population has reached 7 billion; expresses its conviction that family planning should be at the top of the political agenda;
19. Expresses its concern about the slow progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, in particular towards MDG5: Improve Maternal Health, and about the fact that progress towards a reduction by three quarters of the maternal mortality rate is lagging far behind and that the aim of achieving universal access to reproductive health

by 2015 is still far from being achieved; notes that about 1000 women still die each day from entirely avoidable pregnancy- or childbirth-related complications;

20. Urges political and religious leaders to publicly throw their weight behind MDG5 and support modern sexual and reproductive health services;
21. Calls on Member States to uphold their political and financial support for the MDGs, and even step up efforts to achieve MDG5, despite times of economic downturn;

### **Governance**

22. Calls on the incoming Council to unblock the Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation with a view to adoption during the Danish Presidency;
23. Regrets the lack of progress by Member States on plans to modernise existing legislation on maternity leave and calls for a balanced compromise with the future Danish Presidency of the EU with a view to adoption in the first half of 2012 to respond to the needs of European families and of the European economy; calls on the Commission to put forward proposals for leave arrangements for care for elderly or sick relatives;
24. Calls on the Commission to put forward a comprehensive Communication on the situation of single person households in the EU, with policy proposals to achieve fair treatment in areas like taxation, social security, housing, health care, insurance and pensions, based on the principle of policy neutrality with regard to household composition;
25. Reiterates its call to the Commission for a Road Map on Equality for LGBTI people, analogous to the Gender Equality Road Map;
26. Deeply concerned about media reports on victims of human trafficking being treated as criminals instead of getting support, calls on the Commission to investigate the treatment of victims of human trafficking in the Member States;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

The European Union has been an important player in fighting for gender equality anti-discrimination. However in spite of the best efforts, gender equality in the EU is far from being achieved. Legislation may have changed, but traditional gender roles, gender stereotyping and taboos remain an important obstacle to fundamental change.

### **Equal economic independence and equality in decision making**

Economic independence of men and women is key to gender equality. The current economic crisis risks putting us back years, as it may ultimately hit women hard than men. So efforts to improve labour market participation, and access to positions of power such as company boards, needs to stay high on the agenda.

### **Gender equality beyond the Union**

The gap between the position and status of women and men in some countries outside Europe is often dramatic. Women have fewer rights or no rights at all. The EU and its Member States need to do much more to improve the situation of these women, starting with their health. Not only sufficient funds are needed, but a radical change in mentality and tradition.

The European Union and its Member States have developed a wide range of policies in support of families with children, for example the Alliance for Families. Setting up a family is a fundamental right, and policies must ensure people are able to do so in good conditions. However, the exclusive emphasis on families with children does not reflect changing demographic realities. Today, three in ten households are single person households. Often they are put at a disadvantage, both in absolute and relative terms. This imbalance must be redressed.