

EU is stuck half way to achieving gender equality, MEPs say

The EU and its member states should step up their efforts to achieve equality between women and men. Despite progress on some issues, much remains to be done to reduce pay gaps, remove “glass ceilings” blocking women’s careers, remedy their lack of economic independence and improve their work/life balance, say MEPs in a non-legislative resolution voted on Tuesday.

“Data clearly show that the EU is only half way towards achieving gender equality,” said rapporteur Ernest Urtasun (Greens, ES). “Equal pay between women and men in the EU was enshrined in the Treaty of Rome - 60 years on, it is still not a reality. On many issues, including pay, pensions and employment opportunities, progress towards equality in the EU has either stalled or gone into reverse. Gender equality clearly needs to be moved up the political agenda and be given the priority status”, he added.

The resolution based on the report on equality between women and men in the EU in 2014/2015 was adopted by 369 votes to 188, with 133 abstentions.

MEPs urge the Commission and EU member states to:

- put forward a package of legislative and non-legislative measures regarding work-life balance, including the revision of the existing maternity and parental leave directives, as well as the proposals for directives on paternity leave and carer’s leave,
- adopt the Women on Boards directive, which has been on hold in the Council since 2013,
- table a draft law to promote and support the action of member states to prevent violence against women,
- guarantee women’s ready access to voluntary family planning and the full range of reproductive and sexual health services, including contraception and safe and legal abortion, monitor the media and advertising industry for material that promotes sexualisation and commodification of women and frequently portrays female stereotypes,
- monitor respect in the media and the advertising industry for the dignity of women, and
- protect LGBTI people against harassment in the workplace and to revise the current EU framework decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law, in order to include sexism, bias crime and incitement to hatred on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

More women at work, but pay lagging behind

The employment rate for women reached an all-time high of 64% in 2015, while 76% of men were at work. Women are four times more likely than men to engage and remain in part-time work; three quarters of household work and two thirds of parental care were performed by working women.

Despite the fact that women on average have a higher level of education (60% of graduates in the EU are women), the average gender pay gap is 16.1% and women's pensions were 40.2% below those of men in 2014. In half the EU member states the gender pension gap has even widened. Only 6.5 % of presidents and 4.3 % of CEOs of listed companies were women. In eight member states, parental leave is not accompanied by any pay.

Funding for gender equality

In two separate resolutions, MEPs assess how gender mainstreaming is applied in EU funding allocations (approved by 437 votes to 166, with 80 abstentions) and how member states have implemented the directive on gender equality in access to goods and services (499 votes to 104, with 81 abstentions). MEPs stress that EU funding needs to be used more proactively to achieve gender equality goals.

Background

Every year the European Parliament passes a resolution assessing progress made towards achieving equality between women and men.

Further information

[Steps of the procedure](#)

[Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality](#)

[Ernest Urtasun \(Greens/EFA, ES\)](#)

[Adopted text \(2016/2249\(INI\)\) will soon be available here \(14.03.2017\)](#)

[Video recording of debate \(click on 13.03.2017\)](#)

[EbS+ \(14.03.2017\)](#)

[Article: Gender equality: time to close the gap](#)

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[EPTV: Closing Europe's gender gap](#)

[EPTV: More women in science](#)

[Plenary on demand: Gender pay gap debate \(01.03.2017\)](#)

[EP Research: Gender pay gap](#)

[Assessing progress towards gender equality](#)

[Maternity, paternity and parental leave in the EU](#)

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Political groups

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