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*Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality*

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# **DRAFT REPORT**

on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU  
(2012/2116(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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*United in diversity*

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU (2012/2116(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995 and to Parliament’s resolutions of 18 May 2000 on the follow-up to the Beijing Action Platform<sup>1</sup>, of 10 March 2005 on ‘the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women – Platform for Action (Beijing+10)’<sup>2</sup> and of 25 February 2010 on the follow-up to the Beijing Action Platform (Beijing +15)<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
- having regard to Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, which emphasises values common to the Member States such as pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and equality between men and women,
- having regard to Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which refers to combating discrimination based on sex,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 2 December 1998 establishing that the annual assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will include quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks,
- having regard to the common declaration by EU ministers for gender equality made on 4 February 2005 in the context of the 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, in which, inter alia, they reaffirm their strong support for, and commitment to, full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 2 and 3 June 2005 in which Member States and the Commission are invited to strengthen institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality and to create a framework for assessing the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in order to develop more consistent and systematic monitoring of progress,
- having regard to the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), adopted by the European Council in March 2011<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission’s ‘Strategy for equality between women and men: 2010-2015’, presented on 21 September 2010, and the accompanying staff working

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 59, 23.2.2001, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 320E, 15.12.2005, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 348E, 21.12.2010, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Annex to Council Conclusions of 7 March 2011.

document on actions to implement the strategy,<sup>1</sup>

- having regard to its resolution of 3 September 2008 on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men,<sup>2</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 (A7-0000/2012),
- A. whereas Article 8 TFEU states that in all its activities the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women;
- B. whereas stereotypes still exist at all levels of society and in all age groups, affecting how we perceive each other through oversimplified assumptions based on socially constructed norms, practices and beliefs that are often cultural, and religion-based and -fostered, and which reflect underlying power relations, and whereas all direct and indirect forms of gender discrimination should be eliminated in order to guarantee women the right to equal treatment and change the cultural perception that women are in many ways passive or lesser beings than men;

#### **Media and education**

- C. whereas gender discrimination in the media and advertising is still frequent and facilitates the reproduction of gender stereotypes;
- D. whereas children are confronted with gender stereotypes at a very young age through television series, television advertisements, study materials and educational programmes, influencing their perception of how male and female characters should behave;

#### **Labour market**

- E. whereas in 2011 women still earned 16.4 % less than men for the same jobs;
- F. whereas, with reference to the balancing of work and private life, women are in general disproportionately represented in ‘flexible jobs’, suggesting that the traditional belief that women carry the main responsibility for taking care of the family still persists today, forcing them to take part-time jobs and limiting their opportunities on the labour market;
- G. whereas gender stereotypes limit labour-market opportunities, especially for women, in specific male-dominated sectors such as firefighting and construction;

#### **Economic and political decision-making**

- H. whereas a 2011 Commission study shows that in 2012, in the European Union, women represented 14 % of the board members of the largest listed companies, suggesting the existence of a so-called ‘glass ceiling’ that makes it difficult for women to secure top

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2010)0491, SEC(2010)1080.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 295E, 4.12.2009, p. 43.

management jobs;

- I. whereas, although there has been some improvement in the past few years, women continue to be under-represented in political decision-making, at both national and EU level; whereas the representation of women in national governments and parliaments increased from 21 % in 2004 to 23 % in 2009, while the representation of women in the European Parliament increased from 30 % in 2004 to 35 % in 2009;
- J. whereas gender stereotypes must be eliminated, as they limit young women's aspirations and make women less inclined to apply for top management positions in financial, economic and political decision-making, in both the public and private spheres;

### **EU action**

1. Notes that there is a severe lack of progress on honouring the commitments made as part of the Beijing Platform for Action and stresses the need for new indicators in the area of gender stereotypes and for analytical reports at EU level, and invites the European Institute for Gender Equality to address this issue;
2. Notes that, despite the EU's commitment to equality between men and women, there is still a gap in legislation providing for non-discrimination against women and gender equality in the areas of social security, education and the media, emphasises the need for new legislation in these areas and calls on the Commission to take the issue of gender equality into account in all policy fields;
3. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to use the European Social Fund (ESF) to combat gender stereotypes in different professions through positive action, life-long learning and encouragement for girls to undertake studies in fields which are not traditionally seen as 'feminine';

### **Education and media**

4. Stresses the need for special career guidance courses in primary and secondary schools and higher education institutions, in order to inform young people about the negative consequences of gender stereotypes and encourage them to study for and embark on careers that have in the past been considered as typically 'masculine' or 'feminine'; asks that support be provided for any action aimed at reducing the prevalence of gender stereotypes among young children;
5. Draws attention to the fact that gender stereotypes in advertising during children's television programmes are a particular problem, as they have a potential impact on gender socialisation and, subsequently, children's views of themselves, their family members and the outside world, and stresses the importance of reducing children's exposure to gender stereotypes from the earliest possible age;
6. Stresses the need to run special courses on gender stereotypes in the media for national advertising standards committees and self-regulatory bodies so as to raise awareness of the negative influence of gender-discriminatory images on television and in marketing and advertising campaigns;

## **Labour market**

7. Draws attention to the growing concern about the negative influence of gender stereotypes on the gender pay gap of 16.4 % and calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider this concern when developing new policies;
8. Stresses the need for awareness-raising activities in order to inform employers and employees of the link between gender stereotypes and the gender pay gap, to inform other stakeholders in society of the fact that gender stereotypes reduce women's opportunities both on the labour market and in their private lives, and to encourage transparency in public and private companies and agencies;
9. Calls on the Commission to promote quotas in occupations that are traditionally considered as 'male', since stereotypes also come from the scarcity of women in certain positions; notes that the presence of more women in traditionally 'male' occupations will therefore weaken the prevalence of such stereotypes;
10. Reminds the Commission that elderly women are particularly affected by the gender pay gap, as it increases the risk of extreme and persistent poverty once women have reached retirement age;
11. Notes that the likelihood of elderly women ending up in poverty when they reach retirement age will increase as a result of the new EU pension rules; stresses, therefore, the importance of not supporting any amendments in the White Paper that increase the pension gap between men and women;

## **Economic and political decision-making**

12. Draws attention to the fact that the representation of women in national governments stood at 23 % in 2009 and welcomes the idea of introducing quotas in order to increase the number of women in national governments and parliaments, as well as in the EU institutions;

## **Other actions**

13. Calls on the Member States to reflect on their underlying assumptions about women and men in the labour market, as stereotypes can increase occupational segregation and the gender pay gap;
14. Calls on the Commission and the national governments of the Member States to encourage more research on gender stereotyping and to collect further data on gender stereotypes by developing more indicators for gender stereotyping;
15. Calls on the Commission to urge the Member States to honour the commitments made in the European Pact for Gender Equality;
16. Encourages the European Institute for Gender Equality and different national gender equality institutes to promote further research on the root causes of gender stereotypes and the impact of stereotypes on gender equality, and stresses the importance of exchanging

new ideas and research on best practices with a view to eliminating gender stereotypes in the Member States and the EU institutions;

17. Reminds the Commission of Parliament's resolution of 3 September 2008 on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men, and calls on it to implement the recommendations put forward in that resolution;
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

On 15 September 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing, during which the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted. The Conference aimed at ‘removing all obstacles to women’s active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.’ As a basic document for all gender equality work at international level, noted that gender equality is a human right and a prerequisite for equality, development and peace. The European Union annually reviews the progress made to achieve the targets that were set in 1995.

The Platform for Action set an agenda for the following twelve areas: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, the economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment, and the girl child. To narrow down the problem, this report focuses on the causes of gender stereotypes in the areas of education, media, advertising, the labour market and decision-making.

Since 1995, the European Parliament has adopted three resolutions on women’s rights as a follow-up of the Conference. In 2000 it adopted a resolution on the follow-up to the Peking action platform<sup>1</sup>, in 2005 it adopted the resolution on Beijing+10<sup>2</sup>, and in 2010 it adopted the resolution on Beijing+15<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, on 3 September 2008 the Commission adopted a resolution on how marketing and advertising affects equality between women and men<sup>4</sup>.

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that gender equality is a fundamental human right. According to Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, ‘in all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality, between men and women’.

However, more than 15 years after the Conference, gender stereotypes and gender inequality are still common problems in the European Union today. Stereotypical assumptions about women in the labour market are leading to occupational segregation and the gender pay gap. A gender pay gap of 16.4% in 2010 illustrates the severity of this problem. Moreover, women are often under-represented or invisible in the media, or represented in media in roles that are traditionally considered ‘feminine’, encouraging more gender discrimination in different areas of society and all age groups.

The prevalence of negative gender stereotypes based on societal beliefs and attitudes affects women and constraints their opportunities and choices in the social, economic and political sphere. In order to tackle the problem of the lack of women at the higher levels of economic and political decision-making, the persistence of gender stereotypes in all levels of society need to be addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 59, 23.2.2001, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 320 E, 15.12.2005, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 348 E, 21.12.2010, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 295 E, 4.12.2009, p. 43.



The aim of this report is therefore to reduce the prevalence of negative gender stereotypes in the EU that constrain the opportunities and chances of men, but even more so of women. New EU policies and legislation is needed to address gender stereotyping in the areas of education, media and advertisement, the labour market and economic and political decision-making. In order to increase female participation on the labour market and in economic and political decision-making, the following issues need to be addressed:

- Gender stereotypes in primary and secondary schools influence the perception of young children and youngsters of how men and women should behave. Special educational programmes and study materials should therefore be introduced in which men and women are no longer used in examples in their 'traditional roles', with the male as the breadwinner of the family and the female as the one who takes care of the children;
- With reference to media and advertisement, it must also be noted that unsupervised television viewing among children and youngsters starting at a very early age is on the rise. Negative gender stereotypes can therefore have a significant influence on young women's confidence and self-esteem, particularly on teenagers, resulting in a restriction of their aspirations, choices and possibilities for future career possibilities. Given the media's significant influence on people's perception on gender equality, special orientation courses are needed to raise awareness in Advertising Standard Committees and self-regulatory bodies about the negative influences of gender discrimination and stereotypes in the media;
- The disproportionate representation of women in part-time jobs and the gender pay gap clearly show that gender stereotypes result in gender discrimination on the labour market. Awareness-raising campaigns are therefore needed to inform employers, employees and stakeholders about the link between gender stereotypes and the gender pay gap and the link between part-time jobs and the risk of lower pension funds when people reach the retirement pension age;
- Likewise, there is a strong link between gender stereotyping the under-represented of women in political and economic decision-making, both in the public and in the private sphere, including in the national parliaments and governments of Member States and EU-institutions. This not only indicates the 'glass ceiling' that women encounter, but also the fact that stereotyping limits the career aspirations of women.

The equal pay gap of 16.4% does not only disadvantage women on the labour market, it also has a severe negative effect on their pension rights. Both women and men are exposed to gender stereotyping throughout their whole lives; from expectations of how boys and girls should behave in primary and secondary schools, to the specific expectations in later life with reference to career choices, to their representation on the labour market. The over-representation of women in flexible and part-time jobs suggests that the traditional idea that the responsibility of taking care of the children lies with the mother is still in force today, limiting her chances on the labour market. With the new EU plans to ease the procedures and restrictions regarding dismissal and termination of employment contracts, women will now only be more disadvantaged and subjected to more insecurity.

In addition to this, the negative influences of gender stereotyping reach the top when women reach their retirement pension age. Insecurity caused by flexible working hours in combination with the gender pay gap increase the chance of women to end up in persistent and extreme poverty once they have reached the retirement pension age. Inequality between men and women as a result of gender stereotypes is therefore cumulative; the more women are exposed to stereotypes, the bigger their chances are to end up in poverty later on. This effect is increased with the new EU plans to save on state pensions and to introduce more rules on second pillar pension funds. Shifting the focus from state pensions to second pillar pensions by not changing the state pension but increasing the private pillar pensions will not only increase the risk of women of ending up in poverty, it will also lead to a larger income gap between elderly men and women.