



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

2014/2210(INI)

3.3.2015

OPINION

of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on family businesses in Europe
(2014/2210(INI))

Rapporteur: Daniela Aiuto

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas there is a growing presence of women in family businesses and women are a major resource in terms of their high level of education and proven managerial ability when it comes to defining strategies, taking decisions, running companies and solving problems;
- B. whereas, however, little information is available concerning women employed in family businesses, given that the actual concept of the family business is still relatively undocumented;
- C. whereas family businesses, family-run independent businesses and new businesses of this kind represent an important career and personal development opportunity for women, although that fact is not recognised, because there are no female role models to follow;
- D. whereas women encounter substantial difficulties in their involvement in family businesses, and are subject to 'vertical' and 'horizontal' gender segregation, and this despite the high level of education of women, who account for 60 % of all graduates;
- E. whereas in many countries the problem lies in the fact that society is permeated by a culture of male dominance in all walks of life and not only at the workplace;
- F. whereas family farms offer a template for success because they put the principle of the environmentally and socially sustainable circular-flow economy into practice and because in that context women, as leaders, contribute entrepreneurial thinking;
- G. whereas in the EU women earn, on average, 16 % less per hour than men and there is a dearth of women in high-level and leadership positions, and whereas the labour practices and wage systems applied to men are not the same as those applied to women, making it more difficult for the latter to be financially independent, participate fully in the job market and achieve a work-life balance;
- H. whereas women often play an invisible role, or act as figureheads, and do not have their job or salary status appropriately recognised, which has serious repercussions in terms of social security contributions, pensions and welfare entitlements and also in terms of recognition of their skills, as demonstrated by the data on the gender pay gap and pension gap¹;
- I. whereas, in many European countries, women are frequently required to act as figureheads, either for tax reasons or because of legal obstacles preventing a male entrepreneur from holding any position within the business or placing it in his own name;
- J. whereas women have difficulty in taking over family businesses as successors, given that preference is given to sons and that daughters are very often excluded;

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_pay_gap/140319_gpg_en.pdf

- K. whereas women seeking to combine their roles as mothers and business operators frequently find themselves forced to sideline the former or even abandon the notion of motherhood in order to run the business;
 - L. whereas some 60 % of all businesses in the EU are family run or family owned;
 - M. whereas ensuring competent family leadership across generations is one of the main concerns of family businesses, and whereas gender stereotypes privilege sons against daughters in the family firm succession;
 - N. acknowledging the crucial example set by properly functioning family business governance and its importance for the sustainability of the European economy and the social market economy in Europe;
1. Calls for more effective application and implementation of measures ensuring equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in respect of employment and careers, and of proactive measures to promote participation of the under-represented gender, with a view to avoiding horizontal and vertical segregation, wage and job discrimination (invisibility and ‘figurehead’ treatment), especially as regards management duties, positions of responsibility and leadership roles, and providing men and women with the same opportunities, social rights, access to health, wages and pensions;
 2. Maintains that the skills acquired by women from family businesses have to be recognised so as to enable those women to further their careers in other types of businesses;
 3. Calls for the adoption of an unambiguous definition of family businesses for all the Member States, providing a solid career base for both genders, as recommended in the final report of the European Expert Group Overview of Family-Business-Relevant Issues 2009;
 4. Stresses the need to protect women’s right to succession in family businesses, on a par with men, by promoting a culture of fairness between men and women which highlights the entrepreneurial role of women in family businesses, in positions of management, responsibility and leadership and creating an environment in which female entrepreneurs and family businesses can prosper and enterprise is rewarded;
 5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support the European Network of Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors and the European Network of Mentors for Women Entrepreneurs in order to raise their profile;
 6. Draws attention to the important role which women play in running family farms, and calls on the Member States to support business training aimed specifically at women farmers, in order to strengthen women’s involvement in family farming even further; urges in particular, in that connection, that support should be given to training projects for women who run family farms with a view to increasing women’s involvement in farming and regional organisations;
 7. Stresses the need to secure the best possible working conditions in terms of health and security at the place of work;

8. Calls for the 'mother-entrepreneur' figure to be promoted, in order to guarantee the right to maternity and to grant financial assistance for balancing family and business commitments; calls for measures to support family employment and home childcare services with a view to allowing women entrepreneurs to reconcile work and family life;
9. Stresses that offering more opportunities for women in family businesses will benefit both women and businesses;
10. Calls for all possible measures to be adopted to prevent and penalise acts of abuse or coercion, situations conducive to blackmail and/or subjugation, or violence against women at the workplace, pointing out that, in addition to acts of physical violence, seclusion and discrimination are also forms of mental cruelty or psychological aggression;
11. Reminds the Member States and local and regional authorities once again of the importance of there being sufficient provision of high-quality and affordable care services for children, the elderly and other dependent persons, of tax incentives for companies and of other compensation to help women and men working as employees, on their own account or as managers in family businesses to balance their family and work commitments;
12. Calls on the Commission to launch a study and statistical analysis of the presence of women in family businesses in Europe;
13. Stresses the need for separate and duly remunerated periods of maternity, paternity and parental leave which meet the needs of employees, the self-employed and business employers;
14. Urges the European Union and Member States to factor in equality of opportunity for men and women and consider and include proactive measures to promote participation of the under-represented gender as well as the promotion of women's access to professional training each time they legislate on matters relating to family businesses and in particular in the context of the women on boards directive;
15. Emphasises that eliminating all the differences between men and women working in family businesses would generate benefits for the economy and for society in general; points out that the Strategy for Equality between Men and Women 2010-2015 aims to increase the employment rate to 75 % for women, which is the target set in the Europe 2020 Strategy, and that this includes those groups of women with the lowest rates of employment;
16. Stresses the need to establish support frameworks for female business owner-managers in family businesses in order to increase their confidence and self-efficacy;
17. Insists that family businesses be required to ensure equal treatment and opportunities for men and women at work, in the management of the business and in decision making, and that they must to that end adopt measures to prevent any kind of discrimination and to promote gender equality;
18. Stresses the need for specific proposals making for better balance in terms of working, family and personal life by encouraging men and women to share occupational, family

and social responsibilities more evenly, especially where assistance to dependants and childcare is concerned; notes that better provision of day care and nursery services depends not only on public policies for the creation of these facilities, but also on incentives to businesses to offer such solutions; notes that flexibility in respect of working hours and the way work is organised, as well as part-time working, may constitute one means of achieving a better work-life balance;

19. Calls on the Council to reach consensus as soon as possible and adopt the Directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges, so that all companies listed on stock exchanges, including family businesses, meet the target of at least 40 % of the members of their boards of directors being women.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	26.2.2015
Result of final vote	+: 21 -: 3 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	Daniela Aiuto, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Viorica Dăncilă, Anna Hedh, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Elisabeth Köstinger, Vicky Maeijer, Angelika Mlinar, Krisztina Morvai, Maria Noichl, Marijana Petir, Liliana Rodrigues, Jordi Sebastià, Ernest Urtasun, Ángela Vallina, Beatrix von Storch, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Anna Záborská
Substitutes present for the final vote	Inés Ayala Sender, Linnéa Engström, Eleonora Forenza, Kostadinka Kuneva, Constance Le Grip, Dubravka Šuica, Marc Tarabella
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Rosa D'Amato, José Inácio Faria