



**2015/2038(INI)**

3.12.2015

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on International Trade

on implementation of the 2010 recommendations of Parliament on social and environmental standards, human rights and corporate responsibility  
(2015/2038(INI))

Rapporteur: Malin Björk

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on International Trade, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas trade agreements and trade liberalisation may affect women and men differently owing to structural gender inequalities in access to education, job opportunities, services, resources, or in income, their position as consumers, their representation in decision making, their presence in low skill positions, and in terms of different social rules applying to men and women;
- B. whereas gender equality as a strategic objective is essential for the achievement of general EU objectives; whereas the current EU Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015) provides that the EU will integrate gender equality into its trade policy as part of a wider framework of sustainable development;
- C. whereas any measure improving workers' skills, employment stability, working conditions, unemployment insurance and benefits – such as paid leave, including parental leave, and healthcare – is likely to benefit women workers greatly, especially those in the most precarious conditions;
- D. whereas comprehensive and balanced trade agreements may have a positive impact on women's employment rate, contributing to growth and social cohesion; whereas according to Article 8 TFEU the gender dimension should be incorporated into all EU activities, including when negotiating trade agreements;
- E. whereas gender was not mentioned in Parliament's resolution of 25 November 2010 on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in international trade agreements;
- F. whereas the fifth objective of the Sustainable Development Goals is the achievement of gender equality by 2030;
- G. whereas trade agreements should on no account weaken the progress made by the EU, or its Member States, in gender equality;
- H. whereas abolishing barriers to investments in the form of legal rights, social standards, consumer protection and environmental regulations will lead to a 'harmonisation' towards lower labour standards, as well as privatisation of public services and the welfare sector, which will have a negative impact on gender equality;
- I. whereas sustainable and inclusive development and growth must include gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- J. whereas trade liberalisation cannot be expected to eliminate gender inequalities on its own and needs specific tailored measures and economic resources in order to monitor the impact on women;
- 1. Calls for the binding application of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) core labour standards and of its Decent Work Agenda, given that ILO standards are particularly

relevant to improving gender equality because of their principles of non-discrimination on the grounds of sex and equal pay for men and women, as well as international environmental protection commitments in EU preferential trade agreements;

2. Calls for a broad-based effective, continuous and transparent participation of not only women and women's rights organisations and trade unions in particular, but also of environmental, consumer, labour, and development organisations, in trade consultations and negotiations as well as in trade policy-making and related implementation; encourages women and women's organisations to participate actively and to put forward initiatives and information relevant to the negotiations;
3. Calls for increased transparency and accountability for grassroots organisations in the formulation of international trade rules and national trade policies, while ensuring consistency with regard to respect for workers' rights and human rights including women's rights;
4. Calls on the EU to ensure that trade policy does not overturn domestic regulations on social protection, consumer protection, public safety, public health and education, food safety, environmental protection and gender equality;
5. Notes the inclusion of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in the list of conventions of the GSP+ scheme, and calls for thorough monitoring of the beneficiaries' compliance with the obligations;
6. Calls on the EU to systematically include binding, enforceable and non-negotiable human rights clauses, including girls' and women's rights, in the EU's international agreements, including trade and investment agreements already concluded or to be concluded;
7. Reiterates the importance of activating the suspension clause in international trade agreements in the event of human rights infringements by the other contracting party;
8. Recalls likewise the EU's commitment to mainstreaming gender in all its policies and the importance of guaranteeing that men and women benefit equally from social changes, economic growth and the creation of decent jobs, while eliminating discrimination and promoting respect for women's rights in the world;
9. Considers it regrettable that trade agreements are often negotiated without specific reference to their impact on women's and girls' rights such as the rights to health – and the associated rights, including to reproductive health – access to education, training, food, work, safe working conditions and water;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to collect data and analyse in depth the potential specific impact thereof on the situation of women and girls, including in third countries, in order to increase coherence among different but interlinked policies, such as trade, development, employment, migration and gender equality;
11. Calls on the Commission, based on gender-equality benchmarks and resources, to conduct ex ante and ex post assessments of the impact of trade agreements on women and gender equality, as part of a broader human development impact assessment; stresses the need for sound and reliable data to evaluate the gendered impacts of different trade measures and

instruments e.g. TTIP, TISA, CETA; calls for existing trade and investment agreements to be assessed thoroughly, systematically and compulsorily in order to identify any areas which may negatively affect gender equality;

12. Stresses that EU trade policy must ensure that the capacity of states to regulate and protect women's rights, as well as the environment, consumer rights and workers' rights, is not undermined, and that corporations and investors are held accountable to people and governments for their human rights, gender equality, social, environmental and development impacts;
13. Calls for in-depth impact analyses, from a human rights, climate, gender equality and sustainability perspective, on the outcome of multilateral and bilateral trade agreements negotiated between the EU and third countries;
14. Stresses that the EU, when negotiating trade agreements, should be concerned with not only improving global social and environmental standards and a fairer and equitable global model of trade, but also with promoting gender equality;
15. Regrets that gender perspectives have so far been largely neglected in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR); calls on the Commission to mainstream gender into its policy on CSR, including in CSR clauses in international trade agreements through inclusive measures, e.g. for corporations to increase the representation of women in management positions at all levels and to support life-long learning and training for women at work, to ensure adequate work conditions and rights for women throughout their supply chains, and to avoid sourcing material from conflict areas where there is widespread gender-based violence;
16. Notes that the EU Strategy for equality between men and women has not taken due account of the gender dimension of EU trade policy; deplores the fact that the communication of 15 October 2015 on the new EU strategy for trade and investment failed to take due account of gender;
17. Highlights that alternative business models such as cooperatives, mutuals, and social enterprises play an important role at promoting gender equality, and advancing sustainable and inclusive development and growth; calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate and promote these alternative models across the EU, and in trade and development policy.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	3.12.2015
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+ : 15 - : 8 0 : 2
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Daniela Aiuto, Maria Arena, Catherine Bearder, Malin Björk, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Iratxe García Pérez, Anna Hedh, Mary Honeyball, Elisabeth Köstinger, Angelika Mlinar, Maria Noichl, Terry Reintke, Jordi Sebastià, Beatrix von Storch, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Anna Záborská, Inês Cristina Zuber
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Eleonora Forenza, Mariya Gabriel, Julie Girling, Kostadinka Kuneva, Constance Le Grip, Dubravka Šuica, Julie Ward
<b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b>	Kristina Winberg