



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

---

*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

---

**2012/2301(INI)**

30.1.2013

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

on the impact of the economic crisis on gender equality and women's rights  
(2012/2301(INI))

Rapporteur: Gabriele Zimmer

PA\_NonLeg

## SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Stresses the importance of the flagship initiative 'Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion'; invites the Member States to make full use of the Europe for Citizens Programme and the upcoming Programme for Social Change and Innovation, especially with regard to the effective implementation of gender equality objectives; stresses the importance of the Daphne III programme, especially with regard to the protection of women against all forms of violence and the need to achieve high levels of health protection, wellbeing and social cohesion; calls on the Member States to take the necessary action to access the European Social Fund, which plays an important role in professional integration through education and training policies, and to utilise the funds available for targeted anti-poverty programmes;
2. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to integrate a general gender equality approach into all policies, in particular in the employment sector, in order to facilitate the employment of women, and to include this approach in the EU employment guidelines; also calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure gender equality in the context of economic governance, sustainable development and green jobs, vocational education and training, migration, cooperation and development, health and safety, and measures to be planned or implemented to counteract or limit the effects of the crisis and the associated austerity measures;
3. Calls on the Member States to review and highlight the immediate and long-term impact of the economic crisis on women, in particular whether and how it worsens existing gender inequalities, as well as related consequences such as increased risk of gender-based violence, declining maternal and child health and female poverty in old age;
4. Invites the Commission to consider a further adaptation of the Structural Funds so as to ensure additional support for areas of women's employment likely to be affected by the crisis, as well as support for childcare, training and access to employment;
5. Observes that the unemployment rate for women in many Member States has consistently been higher than that for men, which only adds to the existing challenges women are facing in the labour market, including direct or indirect discrimination, multiple discrimination affecting vulnerable women such as women with disabilities, the existence of the glass ceiling, the gender pay gap, part-time work, precarious working conditions, in-work poverty, high concentration in the informal sector with lower earnings, exploitation of domestic workers who are for the most part migrant women, less social protection and insufficient pensions resulting from the aforementioned factors, and the radical reshaping of welfare provisions negatively affecting poor families and single parents, as well as taxation systems negatively affecting women; calls on the Member States to take action to combat labour market segmentation in order to promote women's access to quality employment with decent remuneration and adequate social protection;

6. Considers that the current effects of the crisis will have long-term impacts for women due to the highly gender-segregated nature of the labour market, with the concentration of women in sectors that are characterised by low pay and informal and part-time patterns of work which have a direct impact on women's pension contributions; underlines the importance of addressing labour market segmentation and the root causes of the feminisation of poverty by providing both adequate social protection in periods of transition and in cases of temporary or part-time employment contracts, and access to training, career development and full-time work opportunities; calls for the identification of best practices and recommendations for Member States with regard to their national measures to integrate or reintegrate women into the labour force and, more generally, to eradicate poverty and the social exclusion of women and children;
7. Observes that austerity measures such as cuts in spending on social and health services at a national level tend to impact first on women and girls; points out that global gender inequalities contribute to women often taking on exclusive responsibilities for children and sick family members, meaning that cuts in government support increase the unpaid workload of women;
8. Notes that the wage gap between men and women stands at almost 17 %; calls on the Member States to ensure equal pay for equal work between men and women and to eradicate gender discrimination; invites the Commission to present as soon as possible a draft directive with measures for overcoming the gender pay gap for equal or equivalent work;
9. Stresses that women's rights should not be seen, understood or pursued as competing with men's rights, since the improvement of care services and public services for families is a precondition for both men's and women's participation in the labour market; points out that there is a need to promote the sharing of family and household responsibilities; invites the Member States to introduce measures or to develop existing measures aimed at overcoming gender discrimination and the unequal assignment of roles, such as encouraging men in their right to care for children and sick or disabled relatives;
10. Stresses the importance of reforming macroeconomic, social and labour market policies in order to guarantee economic and social justice for women, develop strategies to promote the fair distribution of wealth, guarantee a minimum income and decent wages and pensions, reduce the gender pay gap, create more high-quality jobs for women coupled with rights to enable them to benefit from public services of a high standard, and improve welfare provision and neighbourhood services, including creches, kindergartens and other forms of pre-school education, day centres, community leisure and family support centres and intergenerational centres;
11. Believes that equality between men and women is a fundamental European target and must constitute one of the main solutions in terms of overcoming the current economic and financial crisis;
12. Notes that the disparities between men and women in terms of employment, wages, career breaks and part-time work arising from family responsibilities have serious consequences for the calculation of pensions and that women's pensions are therefore often lower and they are more likely to be at risk of poverty; calls on the Member States to review their

social protection systems with a view to individualising pension rights and rights under social security schemes in order to eliminate the ‘breadwinner advantage’, thus guaranteeing equal pension rights;

13. Notes that wage bargaining is becoming increasingly decentralised as a result of the crisis and that gender segregation challenges collective bargaining negotiations; acknowledges the role that the social partners, particularly the unions, can play in putting this issue on the negotiation agenda;
14. Calls on the Member States to promote an active labour market policy, a strong social dialogue, job standards and social protection in order to safeguard the rights of women, including migrant women, and to fight forced labour and undeclared work;
15. Calls on all Member States to ratify the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers (Convention 189);
16. Underlines the importance of active labour market policies, labour inspections and social dialogue, as well as of skills upgrading, for promoting the greening of the economy;
17. Calls on the Member States to introduce specific programmes to promote the active inclusion or reintegration of women in the labour market and to create specific opportunities for lifelong learning with a view to ensuring the skills and qualifications, such as empowerment, confidence-building and capacity-building, that are needed with a view to achieving the social and employment targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
18. Calls on the Member States to ensure the participation of women in the decision-making process concerning the policy responses to the crisis, and to adopt the measures that are needed to promote higher employment rates among women, such as guaranteeing free and equal access to affordable public and private childcare for children of all age groups and care services for dependent persons with suitable opening hours; calls for the promotion of adequate maternity, paternity and parental leave arrangements and for support for initiatives of companies to provide flexibility in working hours and in-house childcare services, as well as for the allocation of increased resources to education, lifelong learning programmes and professional qualification and requalification programmes and the introduction of adequate support for family carers including the provision of respite care;
19. Calls on the EU and the Member States to develop policies and programmes to promote work-life balance; underlines the need to invest in affordable universal quality services – such as full-time childcare, all-day school places and care for the elderly – that help promote gender equality, foster a better work-life balance and create a framework that facilitates entering or re-entering the labour market;
20. Stresses that women are often the first to lose their jobs or face wage cuts in times of crisis; believes that protecting the sectors where women tend to be employed is therefore a necessary measure for alleviating the initial impact of an economic crisis and providing for longer-term stability;
21. Regrets that increasing women’s labour market participation is absent from the Annual Growth Survey 2013 despite being one of the EU2020 headline targets; calls on the

Council to add promoting female labour market participation as a priority when adopting this year's economic policy guidelines in the framework of the European Semester;

22. Calls on the Member States, in addition, to develop vocational training policies;
23. Underlines the need to reduce the effects of the economic and financial crisis on families, (with particular reference to those affected by divorce and to situations where children are left in the care of relatives or authorities), including single parents, taking into account that household tasks tend to fall to women;
24. Notes the existence of disparities in the female employment rate between Member States, with a spectrum ranging from 48.6 % to 77.2 %, and believes that this calls for specific measures in each case with a view to achieving the EU2020 targets;
25. Stresses the need to promote female entrepreneurship by encouraging women to set up their own companies and facilitating women's access to finance;
26. Warns that the current crisis may have the effect of putting women at greater risk of domestic violence;
27. Is concerned at the deep cuts in public expenditure resulting from the imposition of austerity measures, leading to severe cutbacks in public-sector jobs and services, which are particularly affecting women and are forcing them to shift from paid work to unemployment or unpaid work, thus exposing them to an even higher risk of poverty;
28. Maintains that measures need to be taken to reduce gender segregation in the labour market both horizontally (the over-representation of women in lower-income occupations) and vertically (the under-representation of women in positions of power and decision-making roles); stresses that precarious conditions of work remain a gender issue, not only in low-skilled sectors and jobs requiring low levels of qualification, but also in occupations requiring higher education, as in the case of precarious posts in the academic world, in which category women are over-represented;
29. Stresses that in the current situation of economic crisis and budgetary austerity women have fewer resources to protect themselves and their children from violence, and thus it is even more important to avert the direct financial impact that violence against women and children has on the judiciary and on health and social services;
30. Draws the Member States' attention to the need for income-enhancing measures, including the development of minimum income schemes and social assistance programmes for persons having difficulty in meeting their basic needs, in particular those with children or care responsibilities, and especially single parents.
31. Stresses the need for gender impact assessment and gender budgeting in all measures taken and all funds used to deal with the economic crisis, especially in the case of the ESF; calls on the Member States to strongly support gender budgeting in order to increase gender equality by correcting negative consequences on revenue and expenditure and improve governance and accountability, in particular with respect to national budgets;

32. Underlines the importance of investing in women and gender equality;
33. Is concerned at the situation of women who live in rural areas where access to a range of services has deteriorated; calls on the Member States to ensure that rural areas are provided with functioning public transport, medical aid and other essential services, in order to reduce migration to the cities and avoid marginalising peripheral areas;
34. Calls on the Member States to improve women's participation at all levels of decision-making;
35. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take measures to improve the promotion of women's entrepreneurship, including financial support for female entrepreneurs;
36. Points out that in a time of crisis many goods or services previously paid for are produced or carried out in the household by women without any remuneration; therefore stresses the need for more comprehensive official statistics which also include unpaid work, in order to fully evaluate the impact of the crisis and austerity measures on the labour market situation of women and men;

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Date adopted</b>   | 24.1.2013   |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                                       | +: 37<br>-: 1<br>0: 0   |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>                         | Edit Bauer, Georges Bach, Heinz K. Becker, Phil Bennion, Pervenche Berès, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Milan Cabrnock, Alejandro Cercas, Minodora Cliveti, Marije Cornelissen, Emer Costello, Andrea Cozzolino, Frédéric Daerden, Sari Essayah, Marian Harkin, Nadja Hirsch, Stephen Hughes, Ádám Kósa, Jean Lambert, Patrick Le Hyaric, Thomas Mann, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Csaba Óry, Siiri Oviir, Sylvana Rapti, Licia Ronzulli, Elisabeth Schroedter, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska, Jutta Steinruck, Traian Ungureanu, Andrea Zaroni |
| <b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>                   | Malika Benarab-Attou, Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto, Richard Howitt, Paul Murphy, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Gabriele Zimmer  |
| <b>Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote</b> | Jens Nilsson  |