



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality*

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**2011/2035(INI)**

11.5.2011

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on Regional Development

on the EC 5th Cohesion Report and the Strategy for the post-2013 Cohesion Policy  
(2011/2035(INI))

Rapporteur: Tadeusz Cymański

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## SUGGESTIONS

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

- A. whereas gender equality has a significant impact on economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe, which is affected by, inter alia, women's participation in the labour market and which has a capacity to guarantee that women and men have the same opportunities as regards access to high-quality education, decent work and the development of a professional career, which will also boost the active population and improve the skills available, thereby helping to raise growth and improve competitiveness,
  - B. whereas only 7% of ESF funding for the period 2000-2006 was used to finance measures to promote equality between women and men; whereas, over the same period, measures providing (direct or indirect) support for equal opportunities subsidised by the ERDF made up 21 % of total funding,
  - C. whereas significant regional differences exist in female participation in the labour market, and whereas on average the participation of women is lower than that of men and women earn less than men; whereas this circumstance can be partially explained by the fact that women find it more difficult to reconcile work and family, since it is generally women who are responsible for looking after children and other dependents,
  - D. whereas women form a majority of the population with higher-education qualifications, and this trend has nevertheless not yet translated into a levelling-out of employment rates; whereas, at the same time, women far outnumber men in the worst-educated population groups, even though this situation has been changing markedly over time,
  - E. whereas in 16 Member States the risk of extreme poverty for women exceeds that for men and whereas women are more numerous among those employed under precarious conditions, especially in rural areas,
  - F. whereas equal opportunities between men and women and the gender mainstreaming principle are expressly indicated in the Regulations governing the Structural Funds as transversal dimensions of policy programming and implementation,
  - G. whereas, on average, half of the people participating in activities organised by the ESF within the framework of active employment policies are women,
1. Insists, in the context of the cohesion policy, on the need to increase financial support for action to facilitate a work-life balance for women and men, in particular more flexible working conditions and sufficient provision of high-quality child-care services and care services for other dependents at affordable prices, which will enable fathers, and especially mothers, to combine work and family, which benefits social cohesion by promoting equal opportunities and the role of the family and favouring parenthood, and also economic cohesion by increasing the participation of women in the labour market;

2. Stresses that increased rates of employment are one of the main factors for growth; points out, likewise, that if the objective of a 75 % employment rate among people aged between 20 and 64 fixed in the Europe 2020 Strategy is to be achieved, it is necessary not only to reduce unemployment but also to integrate people who are currently inactive, into the labour market;
3. Stresses the need to devise innovative measures to combat poverty aimed at women whose position is vulnerable, in particular immigrant women, women on their own and women with large families;
4. Regrets that the progress made towards achieving equality between men and women in the labour market has been very limited and stresses that most EU states are still falling far short of implementing gender mainstreaming in their policies and carrying out systematic assessments of the impact of their policies from the gender perspective, as the Commission points out in the Fifth Cohesion Report;
5. Believes that European Social Fund support should continue to focus primarily on raising employment levels, financing measures targeted at disadvantaged groups (women, young people, long-term unemployed, immigrants, minorities, people with disabilities, etc.) who need support to find a job, promoting continuing vocational training, combating gender discrimination in the choice of career and occupation, backing women's participation in scientific and technological activities and helping them to set up businesses, as well as by co-funding individual economic initiatives by people outside the labour market, including in particular women over the age of 45;
6. Believes that, in the interests of their full integration into the labour market, persons employed under precarious conditions should be entitled in the same way as the unemployed to take part in employment stimulation programmes cofinanced from the structural funds;
7. Stresses the important contribution made by the ERDF towards gender mainstreaming in all the relevant areas, in particular the granting of aid for training and education, for women entrepreneurs and for investment in facilities providing care for children, the elderly and other dependants;
8. Calls for the EAFRD Regulation to be amended to enable, as happens with the ESF, proactive measures to be taken in support of women in the 2014-2020 programming period, which was feasible in previous periods but not in the current one, and which will have very beneficial effects on female employment in rural areas;
9. Calls on the Commission to ensure, in the context of the cohesion policy, that the vocational education of women is strengthened, and on the Member States to further develop 'lifelong learning programmes' and active ageing initiatives, especially after the crisis had detrimental effects on the most vulnerable groups of society such as older, ethnic minority and disadvantaged women;
10. Calls on the Commission and Member States to make provision for specific measures involving existing resources and procedures - for example guarantee funds - to launch micro-financing and micro-credit initiatives geared mainly to women;

11. Supports the Commission in its reform of the cohesion policy, including by concentrating funding on a smaller number of priorities, with targeted measures and strategic objectives, on condition that gender equality in the labour market remains a high priority area in the new period;
12. Calls on the Member States to establish gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities expertise units within the Managing Authorities, introduce a gender impact assessment procedure during the selection phase and strictly monitor the outcomes and results of the programmes implemented in terms of gender equality progress;
13. Calls on the Member States and regional and local authorities to uphold their commitment to gender equality, non-discrimination and access for people with disabilities to all stages of implementation of the programmes; expresses its concern at the fact that, even though all the programmes explicitly mention equality, it is not always taken into consideration when programmes are implemented, as has become clear when their application and results have been assessed;
14. Calls on the Commission to draw up an action plan for determining specific and measurable objectives with time-frames, as set out in the accompanying document entitled 'Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015' and draws attention to the need to monitor the Commission's activities;
15. Calls on the Member States and regional and local authorities to ensure effective implementation of all financial instruments available at European level to support inclusion in the labour market for everyone, particularly the most vulnerable groups of women (women with disabilities, emigrants, women who belong to minorities, women who have been victims of gender violence, women with little training, etc.);
16. Calls on the Commission to urge the Member States to set specific objectives for European mobility, education, training and the development of professional opportunities for women, in the sector devoted to transnational projects under the European Social Fund;
17. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to lay down guidelines for using the European Social Fund in a way which will ensure that young women's specialist skills and abilities are improved in those sectors in which they have less of a presence, in keeping with the strategy for regional development of innovation and quality employment;

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	9.5.2011
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 23 -: 0 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Andrea Češková, Marije Cornelissen, Tadeusz Cymański, Edite Estrela, Ilda Figueiredo, Iratxe García Pérez, Zita Gurmai, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Constance Le Grip, Barbara Matera, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Siiri Oviir, Antonyia Parvanova, Eva-Britt Svensson, Britta Thomsen, Marina Yannakoudakis, Anna Záborská
<b>Substitute(s) present for the final vote</b>	Anne Delvaux, Gesine Meissner, Antigoni Papadopoulou, Angelika Werthmann
<b>Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote</b>	Stanimir Ilchev