



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

2011/2294(INI)

28.2.2012

OPINION

of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on modernising Europe's higher education systems
(2011/2294(INI))

Rapporteur: Andrea Češková

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SUGGESTIONS

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

- A. whereas over 60 % of university graduates are women, but the majority of senior positions in universities (e.g. postdoctoral positions and professorships) are still held by men; whereas only 13 % of institutions in the higher education sector are headed by women and only 9 % of universities have a female head of staff, and whereas women therefore have considerably less influence with regard to research decision-making,
 - B. whereas 35 % of all jobs in the EU will require high-level qualifications by 2020, while only 26 % of the workforce currently has a higher education qualification,
 - C. whereas only 30.15 % of all students in mathematics, science and technology (MST) subjects are female, and whereas largely female-dominated fields include education and training, health and welfare, humanities and the arts,
 - D. whereas the development of a critical mass of women in the decision-making process remains vastly inadequate,
 - E. whereas there is a disturbingly low proportion of women on decision-making boards relating to research, with only 25 % of the members of the European Research Council (ERC) being women; whereas 1 700 projects – representing some EUR 2.5 billion in grants – have been selected to receive funding from the ERC since its establishment in 2007, and whereas almost 90 % of those grants went to male candidates,
 - F. whereas the EU 2020 strategy outlines the need for smart growth in the EU and highlights the importance of R&D and innovation policy, yet the number of women graduating in STEM subjects remains low, with only 20 % of engineering graduates being women,
1. Calls on universities, the EU institutions and the Member States to encourage young women to study subjects in which women are still underrepresented, especially science, technology, IT, engineering and mathematics, which provide the basis for high-level, low-carbon skills; stresses that stereotypes about these professions have to be addressed, for example by informing young women in particular about their possibilities of becoming researchers and about the opportunities available in the research field, including applied research, as that should liberate untapped talent;
 2. Calls on secondary schools and universities to offer specific orientation courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, in order to inform women and encourage them to study and embark on careers in fields in which men are overrepresented;
 3. Notes that there are still gender disparities in European education systems even though almost all countries have now implemented policies to combat them, and that such disparities influence both performance at school and study and career choices, and have a negative effect on economic growth and on the welfare state;

4. Calls on universities and higher education institutions to support and encourage gender studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate level;
5. Calls on the Member States and higher education institutions to introduce special programmes and funds, mentoring schemes and community projects to increase young women's level of training and their participation in research and development, the IT sector and the green economy, and notes that optimal use should be made of role models and pathfinders as a means to inform and advise women students concerning their career choices;
6. Points out that the sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between women and men is a sine qua non for the advancement and achievement of equality between women and men; calls on universities and higher education institutions to recognise that women learners may have specific additional responsibilities outside of learning, such as caring for young children or elderly relatives; stresses the need for universities to supply parents – especially women – with a sufficient quantity of high-quality, affordable and accessible childcare, including community centres, so as to facilitate their equal participation in studies and research; also encourages the introduction of a greater variety of study modes, such as part-time and distance learning, and, in this connection, reminds the Member States and the EU institutions to increase the level of financial support for life-long learning in order to enable women to continue their studies, to re-enter the workforce and to balance their professional and personal responsibilities;
7. Takes the view that, in order to achieve effective gender equality in education, it is essential to eliminate the remaining stereotypes by promoting assertive policies which foster equality between men and women;
8. Calls on the Member States to follow the good example of the so-called 'third-age' or 'third-generation' universities and encourage women to enrol;
9. Considers it necessary to address the scarcity of women in senior public research and teaching positions, as women's participation in science and technology can help to increase innovation and the quality and competitiveness of scientific and industrial research and needs to be promoted; points out that women are far more likely than their male counterparts to take career breaks in order to have a family, and therefore calls on universities and research institutes to provide suitable measures to enable them to balance an academic career with family life (childcare, flexible leave, etc.);
10. Also considers it necessary to review the criteria for promotion to senior research-oriented positions (e.g. professorships) in order to include a strong gender perspective and address the lack of women in such posts;
11. Recalls that, across the Member States, there are still very few initiatives in place to provide information about gender equality and promote gender equality in education; suggests that teachers should receive specific training on equality between men and women;
12. Considers it necessary for higher and further education institutions to review their internal processes with a view to recruiting and promoting the best people, including a significant

proportion of women;

13. Encourages the Member States and higher education institutions to increase the number of female professors and researchers in science, and to initiate mass-media information campaigns to address the issue of underrepresentation of women in MST subjects;
14. Highlights the fact that many female students attending vocational or secondary schools still choose careers which reflect traditional gender roles; notes, therefore, that better vocational guidance is needed in order to combat persistent stereotypes;
15. Encourages universities, higher education institutions and research institutes to adopt and enforce equality strategies in their organisations and to conduct gender impact assessments as part of their decision-making processes; recalls that these institutions are likewise required to ensure equal treatment of, and equal opportunities for, women and men both at work and in education; stresses that, to this end, measures should be adopted to prevent all kinds of discrimination, so as to enable women to achieve better positions in the private and public sectors; encourages women to participate in university/private sector partnerships and co-operation arrangements, e.g. through start-ups or spin-offs;
16. Emphasises that in order to fight gender inequality – which still exists in the education sector – effectively, it is essential to encourage political cooperation between Member States by promoting the exchange of good practices and guaranteeing specific funding programmes;
17. Calls on universities and higher education institutions to increase the representation of women on decision-making boards relating to research, with a view to encouraging more women to work in higher education;
18. Urges all the Bologna Process countries to implement national qualification frameworks and to develop mutual recognition and provide financial support for it;
19. Recalls the Commission's announcement of 1 March 2011 that it intends to propose European legislation in 2012 which will include binding targets aimed at increasing the representation of each sex to at least 40%, if companies do not voluntarily increase the proportion of women on their decision-making bodies by 5 % per year to achieve female representation of 30 % by 2015 and 40 % by 2020;
20. Recognises that women still face barriers to reaching the highest level in the context of postgraduate education and research; calls, therefore, on the Member States and on universities to design and implement national strategies to ensure women's participation in that area;
21. Calls for further government support to put in place measures aimed at opening up access to students from underrepresented groups and lower socio-economic backgrounds, as well as to immigrants and minorities;
22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to set up programmes designed to coach and support young women scientists in relation to participation in research programmes and the submission of grant applications, in order to help them to stay in academia and

research;

23. Reiterates that the gender pay gap is still a huge concern and notes that it is a fact that women have fewer resources during their working lives and find it more difficult to access finance in retirement, and that in the field of higher education women researchers and professors are paid less than their male counterparts at the same level; notes that women are consequently more affected than men by all forms of poverty, including in-work poverty; calls, therefore, for a system of equal remuneration for equivalent research positions, since the gender pay gap is a cost that neither the individual Member States nor the EU as a whole can afford;
24. Criticises the fact that the Commission's agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems is gender-blind, and that gender mainstreaming is basically non-existent;
25. Calls on the Member States to introduce a requirement for gender-balanced research teams as an eligibility criterion for state-funded research projects;
26. Points out that, because their higher education qualifications are not marketable enough, women are more often overqualified and underpaid for their jobs and often end up unemployed or in casual jobs, a situation which further disadvantages them on the labour market at the start of their careers, fuelling the cycle of pay inequality;
27. Stresses that improving the labour-market participation of young women has a very positive impact on competitiveness and growth, as well as ensuring the economic independence of women during the early and later stages of their lives;
28. Encourages higher education institutions to include a gender dimension in higher education curricula, given that such a dimension is still largely absent.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	27.2.2012
Result of final vote	+: 29 -: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Regina Bastos, Edit Bauer, Andrea Češková, Edite Estrela, Iratxe García Pérez, Sophia in 't Veld, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Constance Le Grip, Astrid Lulling, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Siiri Oviir, Raül Romeva i Rueda, Joanna Senyszyn, Joanna Katarzyna Skrzydlewska, Britta Thomsen, Angelika Werthmann, Marina Yannakoudakis, Anna Záborská, Inês Cristina Zuber
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Kent Johansson, Christa Klač, Kartika Tamara Liotard, Ana Miranda, Mariya Nedelcheva, Katarína Neved'alová, Antigoni Papadopoulou, Sirpa Pietikäinen