OPINION

of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs

on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2015 priorities (2015/2210(INI))

Rapporteur: Ernest Urtasun
SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

A. whereas equality is a founding value of the EU and a necessary condition for achieving the Europe 2020 employment and poverty reduction targets, to which compliance with national gender equality legislation and proper implementation of the EU gender equality directives can substantially contribute;

B. whereas women’s access to the labour market is a factor in skill diversity on the job market, the direct consequence of which is accessibility to better resources for enterprises and hence to greater competitiveness, employment and growth within the internal market;

C. whereas women are affected by cuts to public services including health, education and housing, both directly as users and employees, and indirectly through their support for family members who rely on core public services; whereas reductions in spending on health personnel has increased the care burden on women in many Member States who often work in conditions of precariousness and exploitation;

D. whereas the employment rate, and incidentally the growth rate in the EU’s internal market, is in part reliant on the ability of men and women to achieve a good work-life balance;

E. whereas the economic crisis and fiscal consolidation policies have disproportionately affected women, particularly those from marginalised communities, young women, and women suffering from multiple discrimination;

F. whereas sustainability of public finances is one of the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy, and whereas investment by Member States in education in general, and that of young women more specifically, is an integral part of their national budgets;

G. whereas labour market and job creation policies must strive for the creation of high-quality jobs in line with the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda;

H. whereas persistent high rates of youth unemployment and social exclusion across the EU in recent years have led to a destruction of human capital, and have affected women and girls disproportionately; whereas these long-term impacts of the economic crisis must be addressed in a gender-sensitive manner;

I. whereas the current economic situation has demonstrated the need for closer coordination of the Member States’ macroeconomic and budgetary policies if a more integrated and balanced economic union is to be achieved;

I. Regrets the absence of gender mainstreaming in the Europe 2020 strategy, and calls on the Commission and the Council to introduce into the strategy a gender equality pillar and an overarching gender equality objective;
2. Reiterates that the goal of coordinating economic and fiscal policies in the Member States can only be achieved if policies on equality are also coordinated;

3. Welcomes those country-specific recommendations (CSRs) intended to advance gender equality, but calls for greater inclusion of the gender mainstreaming perspective in the formulation of CSRs, specifically as regards labour market reforms and work-life balance in particular; calls on the Commission to ensure that the CSRs of the European Semester on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency and addressing the gender pay gap are implemented by the Member States; also calls for specific equality policy guidance on reducing other gender inequalities to be included in the annual growth survey;

4. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to remove the constraints on women participating in the labour market, notably by establishing mechanisms, especially appropriate periods of maternity, paternity and parental leave, to be standardised across the EU, in order to enable women to achieve a good work-life balance;

5. Reiterates its call on the Member States to incorporate the gender dimension into their stability and convergence programmes and national reform programmes, through the setting of qualitative targets and measures that address persisting gender gaps which often result in women finding themselves below the poverty line at a later stage of their lives, as well as to systematically apply the principles of gender budgeting with a view to examining the current action programmes and policies, their effects on resource allocation, and their contribution to equality between women and men;

6. Reminds the Member States and the Commission that barriers preventing women from accessing the labour market have a direct impact on the potential return on Member States’ investment in education;

7. Reiterates its call on the Commission to facilitate the monitoring of the employment and poverty reduction headline targets by requesting that the Member States use gender-disaggregated data, and to define additional gender-specific indicators; 8. Stresses that Member States should improve the participation rate of children and young adults in educational systems and should put more focus on the problem of early school leaving, especially by collecting information on its main causes with a view to adopting and implementing policies for its prevention;

9. Calls on the Commission to support the Member States in making greater use of structural funds for investment in public care structures and services for children, the elderly and other dependents; notes the disproportionate impact that lack of investment in public care structures and services has on single parents, the vast majority of whom are women;

10. Stresses the need to prioritise action to tackle unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, which affect women above all, and to give priority to sustainable employment/quality jobs, investment, and quality public services which ensure social inclusion, especially in the areas of education, health, childcare, care of dependent persons, public transport and social services;
11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to formulate and implement CSRs on subjects specifically affecting the position of women in labour markets, including, among others:

i) removing the structural barriers women face in entering and advancing in male-dominated sectors, such as science, technology, entrepreneurship, finance, and the green economy;

ii) tackling the gender pay and gender pension gap across sectors;

iii) striving to increase the representation of women in economic decision-making across sectors;

iv) addressing the need for the empowerment of women and girls through formal and informal education, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, entrepreneurship, economics and business studies, as well as the need to improve skills matching, training and lifelong learning facilities for women at work across sectors;

12. Notes that the financial and economic crisis has had serious implications for the demographic challenges facing Europe, including the ageing population; notes that the gender pensions gap in Europe stands at 39%; emphasises that employment policies and the design of social transfer systems have profound implications for women’s ability to pay pension contributions, and that CSRs should take account of this; believes that the gender implications of longer working lives need to be examined;

13. Invites the Commissioner(s) responsible to discuss the gender aspects of the Annual Growth Survey with the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality each year;

14. Emphasises the need for the Commission and the Member States to assess the impact of structural reform policies on women in marginalised communities suffering from multiple discrimination; calls on the Commission to formulate CSRs specifically to address the obstacles faced by these women;

15. Is deeply concerned at the fact that cuts in the financing of women’s organisations, institutions and equality bodies have led to closures and a significant scaling-back of operations;

16. Calls for specific guidelines and procedures to be included in the European Semester to ensure accountability, consultation and dialogue with national stakeholders, civil society organisations and trade unions;

17. Stresses that labour market flexibility must not come at the cost of forms of social protection such as minimum wages, collective bargaining rights or maternity and paternity rights, or of the preservation of secure quality jobs in line with the Decent Work Agenda; highlights the important role of civil society engagement, social dialogue, trade unions and employee representation in the formulation and implementation of labour market policies;
18. Expresses its concern that the deregulation and flexibilisation of employment relations in many Member States has led to violations of employment laws, including direct and indirect discrimination against women;

19. Suggests involving the European Institute for Gender Equality more closely in the European Semester;

20. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to do more to use the recovery from the economic crisis as an opportunity to promote a more socially and environmentally sustainable economic model, by, among other means, accelerating green job creation and promoting social enterprise and alternative business models, such as mutuals and cooperatives;

21. Highlights that women in Europe are over-represented in part-time, temporary, low-paid and undeclared employment, and that precarious forms of employment have spread in recent years as a result of austerity measures including the deregulation of the labour market and reform of labour rights and bargaining practices; is deeply concerned that levels of in-work poverty have increased.
# RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

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<th>Date adopted</th>
<th>15.9.2015</th>
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<td><strong>Result of final vote</strong></td>
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**Members present for the final vote**
- Daniela Aiuto, Maria Arena, Catherine Bearder, Malin Björk, Iratxe García Pérez, Anna Hedh, Mary Honeyball, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Elisabeth Köstinger, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Barbara Matera, Krisztina Morvai, Angelika Niebler, Maria Noichl, Margot Parker, Marijana Petir, Terry Reintke, Liliana Rodrigues, Jordi Sebastià, Michaela Šojdrová, Angela Vallina, Beatrix von Storch, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Anna Záborská, Jana Žitňanská

**Substitutes present for the final vote**
- Biljana Borzan, Ildikó Gáll-Pelcz, Sylvie Goddyn, Constance Le Grip

**Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote**
- Michel Reimon