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Equality between women and men in the EU

European Parliament resolution on equality between women and men in the European Union (2004/2159(INI))

The European Parliament

- having regard to the report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on equality between women and men - 2005 (COM(2005)0044),
 - having regard to the Community strategy on equality between women and men (2001-2005) (COM(2000)0335) and the Commission's annual reports for 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2004 (COM(2001)0179, COM(2002)0258, COM(2003)0098 and COM(2004)0115),
 - having regard to Articles 2, 3(2) and 141 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union¹,
 - having regard to Articles I-2 and I-3 of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe²,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0401/2005),
- A. whereas equality between women and men must be guaranteed in all policy areas, as stated by Article 3(2) of the EC Treaty and Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- B. whereas equality between women and men calls for a multidimensional approach using a complete range of measures in all areas, including education, employment and careers, the entrepreneurial spirit, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, a better balance between work and family life and a balanced participation by women and men in political and economic decision-making processes,
- C. whereas it is questionable whether it is compatible with Article 141 of the EC Treaty to allow for higher contributions or lower benefits on the basis of sex in occupational social security schemes,
- D. whereas women are under-represented in political decision-making bodies throughout the Union; and whereas, in particular, in some of the Member States and accession and candidate countries the percentage of women parliamentarians is below the worldwide average of 15.6%,
- E. whereas adequate access to services for the care of children, the elderly and other

¹ OJ C 364, 18.12.2000, p. 1.

² OJ C 310, 16.12.2004, p. 1.

dependants is essential in order to enable men and women to participate fully and equally in the labour market,

- F. whereas the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 emphasised the need to create not only more jobs (by increasing the percentage of women in work from 51% to 60%), but also better-quality jobs, for women by 2010,
- G. whereas the European Council of March 2004 recognised that policies of equality between women and men are instruments of both social cohesion and economic growth,
- H. whereas the risks of poverty and social exclusion, factors which inhibit economic development and social cohesion within the European Union, are higher among elderly women, women immigrants and women bringing up their children alone,
- I. whereas, in parallel to efforts undertaken within the equality pillar of the European employment strategy aimed at reconciling work and family life, action should also be taken to narrow the pay gap between the sexes, as well as with regard to health protection and the prevention and diagnosis of diseases typically affecting women,
- J. whereas the divide between women and men, both in terms of promotion prospects and when they are employed at the same level, continues to be such that women are far less represented at decision-making level and far more so in low-paid jobs,
- K. having regard to the need to encourage equality between women and men more vigorously within the three other pillars of the European employment strategy, i.e. employability, the entrepreneurial spirit and adaptability,
- L. whereas the structural funds and the other financial instruments constitute an important catalyst for Community and national policies geared towards equality between women and men and whereas the incorporation of the dimension of equality between women and men is aimed at surmounting structural inequalities in the organisation of work and family life, which restrict participation by many women in the labour market, vocational training, and lifelong learning and public life,
- M. whereas there is a need – within the framework of the implementation of the European employment strategy and with a view to establishing a policy of full employment and high-quality employment – to support the entrepreneurial spirit among women through specific measures, providing among other things for targeted training and promotion of access to credit, including micro-credit,
- N. whereas the second annual report on equality between women and men, called for by the Heads of State and Government at the European Council of March 2003, is the first to cover the enlarged Union of 25 Member States, but does not cover the accession or candidate countries, namely Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Croatia,
- O. whereas the Commission's report is descriptive in nature and deals with significant developments in the law in the Member States, but avoids mentioning shortcomings in transposition and the violations of Community law committed by the Member States and includes no analysis or evaluation of the current situation,
- P. whereas the Commission report shows that the disparities between women and men have

decreased in employment and education within the European Union, but that the pay gap between the two sexes has remained virtually the same, and clearly demonstrates that there has been no real progress in the implementation of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, which was introduced thirty years ago by Council Directive 75/117/EEC of 10 February 1975 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women¹; whereas in the Union of 15 the gap remained stable at about 16%, whilst the estimated figure for the Union of 25, which takes account of pay differences in the new Member States, is, at 15%, slightly lower,

- Q. whereas even though women's educational attainments are higher than those of men, they still find work later, and the employment rate for women aged between 15 and 24 years has not increased,
- R. having regard to the increased importance for organisations working in the field of gender equality firstly of ensuring adequate visibility for the Union's policies promoting equality between women and men and disseminating them to the public in all Member States in a more effective way, e.g. with the help of the NGOs, and secondly of measures facilitating access to related Community programmes,
- S. whereas the setting-up of the European Institute for Gender Equality will facilitate the collection and compilation of data, the development of methodological tools and the dissemination and exchange of best practices with a view to enhanced promotion of the principle of gender equality,
- T. whereas the Commission has decided to designate 2007 the 'European Year of Equal Opportunities for All',
 - 1. Welcomes the fact that the European Council in spring 2004 recognised that gender equality policies are instruments of social cohesion and economic growth;
 - 2. Welcomes the recognition that it is important to close the gender pay gap and to facilitate reconciliation of work and family life for both women and men;
 - 3. Considers it vital for the Commission to inform Parliament of the progress made in these fields in the various Member States, with particular regard to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, including with respect to reproductive and sexual health, and to publish regular statistics covering each of the Member States;
 - 4. Stresses that gender equality and an effective integrated approach to gender equality ('gender mainstreaming') call for political commitment at the highest level;
 - 5. Calls on political parties, at national as well as European level, to review their party structures and procedures so as to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, and to adopt adequate strategies to achieve a better balance of women and men in elected assemblies;
 - 6. Recalls Article 3(2) of the EC Treaty, according to which the Community must seek to eliminate inequalities and promote equality between women and men in all its activities;

¹ OJ L 45, 19.2.1975, p. 19.

7. Takes the view that legislation on equal treatment between women and men should cover social protection, including health care, and education;
8. Welcomes the creation of the European Institute for Gender Equality and hopes that it will be given the necessary autonomy and resources to carry out its tasks;
9. Urges the Commission to use the structural funds to promote equality between women and men, by ensuring that that aspect is included in operational programmes;
10. Expresses its concern at trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation and at the rise in domestic violence and urges the Commission to take steps aimed at reducing these scourges;
11. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to make sure that pension schemes are not discriminatory against women and that they do not reinforce existing patterns that already place women at a disadvantage in terms of benefits and contributions;
12. Calls on the Member States and the accession and candidate countries to provide statistics on the gender pay gap in all areas of work and to pursue more vigorous and extensive measures to implement Community legislation aimed at reducing the pay gap, and to eliminate the gender divide on the labour market in order to increase the percentage of women working in senior posts commensurate with their qualifications;
13. Stresses the importance of avoiding gender segregation in the labour market and calls on the Member States, in their educational systems, to encourage young women to pursue studies in non-traditional fields;
14. Urges the Member States to take appropriate measures to support the reconciliation of work and private life for working women, e.g. by providing facilities for the care of children, the elderly and dependants and devising more flexible working conditions;
15. Stresses once more how important it is that the Commission monitor compliance by the Member States with the *acquis communautaire* in the area of equality between women and men in all Union policies, particularly employment but also access to and provision of goods and services; calls therefore on the Commission to carry out a study into how Member States implement Community legislation and to take appropriate action in the event of non-transposition or violation in view of Member States' actual implementation of the *acquis* in the area of equality;
16. Stresses the fact that European policy on equality between women and men must remain transparent and visible in order to encourage the participation of all concerned, including the social partners;
17. Considers that Member States should promote measures to combat poverty effectively, particularly among women, in order gradually to ensure their economic survival and place in society;
18. Recalls that, in the context of the 'European Year of Equal Opportunities for All' in 2007, European policy on equality between women and men must, as a priority, be reaffirmed as a cross-cutting policy with multidimensional relevance and that special attention should be given to disadvantaged groups;

19. Reminds the Member States of their commitments, agreed at the Barcelona European Council in 2002, to eliminate obstacles to the equal participation of women and men in the labour market and to introduce by 2010 childcare for 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory school age, and for at least 33% of children under three years old; calls on the Member States to put forward similar targets for facilities for care for the elderly and sick relatives;
20. Encourages the Member States to set up accessible and affordable care structures for children and dependants;
21. Stresses the need to support the social integration of immigrant women, who are often the victims of two-fold discrimination because of their gender and national or religious origin, by facilitating their access to education, supporting their business activities and incorporating them into European Social Fund programmes and the Equal programme aimed at improving the social position of migrants;
22. Encourages the Commission to work out statistics on the establishment of childcare structures and care for elderly people and dependants and on access to those structures; calls for the necessary evaluation of how the tools already in existence that contribute to the real establishment of equality between men and women in all areas of daily life are used and how they work;
23. Recommends better coordination between the mainstreaming policy and the Lisbon strategy in order to take better account of the gender perspective in fulfilling the ambitious objectives set out in Lisbon;
24. Stresses the importance of cooperation with the social partners in efforts to enhance the role of women at the workplace, and the particular role of women's organisations in boosting the participation of women in social and political life;
25. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen the representation of women on decision-making bodies, which is an essential condition for the effective integration of the principle of gender equality into all policies;
26. Asks the Commission to include facts and statistics from acceding and candidate countries in future annual reports on equality between women and men;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments of the Member States and the accession and candidate countries.