

Eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU

European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2013 on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU (2012/2116(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995 and to Parliament’s resolutions of 18 May 2000 on the follow-up to the Beijing Action Platform¹, of 10 March 2005 on ‘the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women – Platform for Action (Beijing+10)’² and of 25 February 2010 on the follow-up to the Beijing Action Platform (Beijing +15)³,
- having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
- having regard to Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, which emphasises values common to the Member States such as pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, and equality between men and women,
- having regard to Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which refers to combating discrimination based on sex,
- having regard to Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)⁴, and Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services⁵,
- having regard to Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions⁶,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 2 December 1998 establishing that the annual assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action will include quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks,
- having regard to the common declaration by EU ministers for gender equality made on 4 February 2005 in the context of the 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, in which, inter alia, they reaffirm their strong support for, and commitment to, full and

¹ OJ C 59, 23.2.2001, p. 258.

² OJ C 320 E, 15.12.2005, p. 247.

³ OJ C 348 E, 21.12.2010, p. 11.

⁴ OJ L 204, 26.7.2006, p 23.

⁵ OJ L 373, 21.12.2004, p. 37.

⁶ OJ L 269, 5.10.2002, p. 15.

effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,

- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 2 and 3 June 2005 in which Member States and the Commission are invited to strengthen institutional mechanisms for promoting gender equality and to create a framework for assessing the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in order to develop more consistent and systematic monitoring of progress,
 - having regard to the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), adopted by the European Council in March 2011¹,
 - having regard to the Commission's 'Strategy for equality between women and men: 2010-2015', presented on 21 September 2010, and the accompanying staff working document on actions to implement the strategy (COM(2010)0491, SEC(2010)1080),
 - having regard to its resolution of 3 September 2008 on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2012 on equality between women and men in the European Union³,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0401/2012),
- A. whereas Article 8 TFEU states that in all its activities the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women;
- B. whereas, despite some progress having been made in many Member States, many women continue to carry a disproportionate share of the burden when it comes to raising children and taking care of other dependants; whereas the persistence of stereotypes acts as a barrier to the sharing of family and domestic responsibilities between women and men and hinders the achievement of equality in the labour market;
- C. whereas stereotypes still exist at all levels of society and in all age groups, affecting how we perceive each other through oversimplified assumptions based on socially constructed norms, practices and beliefs that are often cultural, and religion-based and -fostered, and which reflect and perpetuate underlying power relations;
- D. whereas all direct and indirect forms of gender discrimination should be eliminated in order to guarantee women the right to equal treatment and change the cultural perception that women are in many ways passive or lesser beings than men;
- E. whereas traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to have a strong influence on the division of roles between women and men in the home, in the workplace and in society at large, with women depicted as running the house and caring for children while men are depicted as wage-earners and protectors; whereas gender stereotypes tend to perpetuate the

¹ Annex to Council Conclusions of 7 March 2011.

² OJ C 295 E, 4.12.2009, p. 43.

³ Text adopted P7_TA(2012)0069.

status quo of inherited obstacles to achieving gender equality, and to limit women's range of employment choices and personal development, impeding them from realising their full potential as individuals and economic players, and therefore constitute strong obstacles to the achievement of equality between women and men;

- F. whereas gender roles are shaped and imposed through a variety of social influences, notably the media and education, and are formed during the socialisation phases of childhood and adolescence, therefore influencing people throughout their lives;
- G. whereas women in rural areas suffer from even greater discrimination and gender stereotypes than women in urban areas and the employment rate of women in rural areas is much lower than that of women in cities;
- H. whereas gender stereotypes are often combined with other stereotypes, such as stereotypes discriminating on the basis of age, migration status, sexual orientation, disability, etc., and therefore affect women with multiple identities to a greater extent;
- I. whereas violence against women is an infringement of human rights that affects all social, cultural and economic strata;

Media and culture

- J. whereas gender discrimination in the media, communication and advertising is still frequent and facilitates the reproduction of gender stereotypes, especially by portraying women as sex objects in order to promote sales; whereas, for example, in advertising women account for 27 % of the employees or professionals shown, but 60 % of those portrayed doing housework or looking after children; whereas advertising and the media can, nevertheless, also be a powerful catalyst in combating stereotypes and gender-based prejudices;
- K. whereas children are confronted with gender stereotypes at a very young age through role models promoted by television series and programmes, discussions, games, video games and advertisements, study materials and educational programmes, attitudes in schools, the family and society, which influence their perception of how men and women should behave and which have implications for the rest of their lives and their future aspirations;
- L. whereas the way in which girls are portrayed in the public space reduces the esteem in which society holds them and promotes violence against girls; whereas, while the media can play a positive educational role, girl child stereotypes are widespread in the media and often tend to reinforce traditional attitudes and behaviour, including in advertisements and children's programmes;
- M. whereas in television programmes, computer games and musical video clips there is an increasingly noticeable tendency, partly for commercial purposes, to show provocatively dressed women, in sexual poses, thereby further contributing to gender stereotyping; whereas the lyrics of songs for young people contain sexually suggestive content, which often promotes violence against women and girls;
- N. whereas young women and men are most affected by pornography's new cultural status; whereas the 'mainstreaming of pornography', i.e. the current cultural process whereby pornography is slipping into our everyday lives as an evermore universally accepted, often idealised, cultural element, manifests itself particularly clearly within youth culture: from

teenage television and lifestyle magazines to music videos and commercials targeted at the young;

Education and training

- O. whereas access to formal primary, secondary and third-level education and the content of the curriculum as taught to girls and boys is a major influencing factor on gender differences and, correspondingly, on choices and access to rights; whereas, while both girls' and boys' access to education may generally appear to be less problematic in the EU than in other parts of the world, it should nevertheless be pointed out that girls and boys are not equal in accessing and fully availing themselves of education systems and opportunities; whereas, in particular, access for girls from minority groups, such as girls from the Roma community, migrant girls, asylum seekers, refugees and girls with disabilities, remains highly problematic in some countries;
- P. whereas the notion of equality can be instilled in children at a very young age and an upbringing where equality is acknowledged can teach them to combat gender stereotypes;
- Q. whereas the stereotypes which still exist with regard to the educational and professional options available to women help to preserve inequalities; whereas education and training continue to transmit gender stereotypes, as women and men often follow traditional education and training paths, and this has serious repercussions on the labour market, limiting career diversification and often placing women in occupations that are less valued and remunerated;
- R. whereas in the education process boys and girls are still not encouraged to take an equal interest in all subjects, in particular as regards scientific and technical subjects;
- S. whereas, although many European countries do include a gender dimension in their career guidance, this is normally aimed at girls to encourage them to choose careers in technology or science, and there are no initiatives to encourage boys to consider careers in education, health or the humanities;

Labour market

- T. whereas the impact of gender stereotypes on education and training has strong implications for the labour market, where women still face both horizontal and vertical segregation, and whereas this contributes to certain sectors still being considered 'male' (with more than 85 % men) and their pay levels consequently being higher than those of sectors considered 'female' (with more than 70 % women); whereas, moreover, there are generally more women employed in lower socio-economic status jobs and this also undermines their confidence and self-esteem;
- U. whereas gender stereotypes on the labour market still limit women's access to certain sectors, such as engineering, fire-fighting, manufacturing, construction, carpentry, mechanics, the technical and scientific sectors and new technologies, but also limit men's access to childcare sectors (midwives, nursery nurses, etc.);
- V. whereas a better knowledge of the jobs on the labour market would help improve access to all professional training courses;

- W. whereas gender stereotyping is counterproductive and contributes on the labour market to gender divisions within occupations, and thus to widening the gender pay gap;
- X. whereas in 2010 women still earned an average of approximately 16,4 % less than men for the same jobs in the EU, and whereas the pay gap varies within Member States, exceeding an average of 22 % in some of them in 2011; whereas, although there are many complex reasons for this salary gap, it is often the result of gender stereotypes and women being seen solely in terms of the traditional role distribution;
- Y. whereas, with reference to the reconciling of work and private life, women are in general disproportionately represented in ‘flexible jobs’ and part-time jobs, which suggests that the traditional belief that women carry the main responsibility for taking care of the family still persists today, forcing them to take part-time jobs with flexible hours or on a short-term basis, and limiting their opportunities on the labour market and for promotion;
- Z. whereas breaks in women’s careers, for maternity or parental leave, widen the pay and pensions gap between men and women;

Economic and political decision-making

- AA. whereas a 2011 Commission study shows that, in 2012, in the European Union, women represented 14 % of the board members of the largest listed companies, suggesting the existence of a so-called ‘glass ceiling‘ that makes it difficult for women to secure top management jobs and equal opportunities for promotion;
- AB. whereas, although there has been some improvement in the past few years, women continue to be under-represented in political decision-making, at local, national and EU level; whereas the representation of women in national governments and parliaments increased from 21 % in 2004 to 23 % in 2009, while the representation of women in the European Parliament increased from 30 % in 2004 to 35 % in 2009;
- AC. whereas gender stereotypes and sexism are still prevalent in both political and economic decision-making bodies, with regular instances of sexist remarks and harassment, including some forms of sexual harassment and violence against women;
- AD. whereas gender stereotypes must be eliminated, especially at company level, where most leadership positions are held by men, as they contribute to limiting young women’s aspirations and make women less inclined to apply for top management positions in financial, economic and political decision-making, in both the public and private spheres;

EU action

1. Notes that there is a severe lack of progress on honouring the commitments made both by the EU and by various governments as part of the Beijing Platform for Action, and stresses the need for new indicators in the area of gender stereotypes and for analytical reports at EU level, and invites the European Institute for Gender Equality to address this issue;
2. Notes that, despite the EU’s commitment to equality between men and women, there is still a gap in legislation providing for non-discrimination against women and gender equality in the areas of social security, education and the media, employment and wages; emphasises the need to step up implementation of existing legislation in these areas and bring in new

legislation; calls on the Commission to mainstream the issue of gender equality in all policy fields, as this will enhance the growth potential of the European labour force;

3. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make efficient use of funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) for long-term strategies in order to make those labour-market sectors where women are under-represented because of gender stereotypes more familiar and attractive to them; considers that the strategies should include positive action, life-long learning and active encouragement for girls to undertake studies in areas which are not traditionally seen as 'feminine', such as information technology or mechanics, and to support work-life balance measures for both men and women;
4. Asks the Commission to support measures by Member States to eliminate stereotypes and promote stereotype-free access for all to education and employment;
5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to give strong and lasting support to the current DAPHNE programme and the forthcoming Rights and Citizenship programme, as a means of combating violence against women, as well as gender stereotypes;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop strategies that attack the root causes of discrimination and violence against women, which are entrenched in stereotypes and inequalities between women and men, beginning with the deconstruction of gender stereotypes;

Media and culture

7. Draws attention to the fact that the inclusion of gender stereotypes in advertising during children's television programmes, as well as in these programmes, is a particular problem, in view of its potential impact on gender socialisation and, subsequently, children's views of themselves, their family members and the outside world; stresses the importance of reducing children's exposure to gender stereotypes, possibly by providing critical media education in schools;
8. Stresses the importance of also including boys in the gender mainstreaming process and therefore urges the teaching of specifically-designed exercises to raise their awareness of stereotypes;
9. Stresses that advertising often conveys discriminatory and/or undignified messages based on all forms of gender stereotyping, which hinder gender equality strategies; calls on the Commission, the Member States, civil society and advertising self-regulatory bodies to cooperate closely in order to combat such practices, notably by using effective tools which guarantee respect for human dignity and probity in marketing and advertising;
10. Points out also that advertising can be an effective tool in challenging and confronting stereotypes and a lever against racism, sexism and discrimination, essential in today's multicultural societies; calls on the Commission, the Member States and advertising professionals to strengthen training and education activities as a way to overcome stereotypes, combat discrimination and promote gender equality, especially from a young age; urges the Member States, in particular, to introduce and develop close cooperation with existing schools of marketing, communication and advertising, so as to help provide sound training for the sector's future workforce;

11. Stresses the need to run special courses on gender stereotypes in the media for national advertising standards committees and self-regulatory and regulatory bodies so as to raise awareness of the negative influence of gender-discriminatory images on television, the internet and in marketing and advertising campaigns;
12. Calls on the EU to develop awareness campaigns on zero-tolerance across the EU for sexist insults or degrading images of women and girls in the media;
13. Calls on the EU and its Member States to conduct training and awareness training actions with media professionals on the harmful effects of gender stereotypes and good practices in this area;
14. Stresses the importance of promoting the representation of the female image in a way that respects women's dignity, and of combating persistent gender stereotypes, in particular the prevalence of degrading images, whilst fully respecting freedom of expression and freedom of the press;
15. Calls on the EU and its Member States to take concrete action on its resolution of 16 September 1997 on discrimination against women in advertising¹;
16. Calls on the Commission to assist Member States in combating the sexualisation of girls not only by compiling the necessary data, promoting good practices and organising information campaigns, but also by providing financial support for measures taken in the Member States, in particular for women's organisations fighting against sexualisation and violence against women and girls;
17. Calls on the Member States to implement positive action measures to ensure that more women have access to management positions in the media, including top management positions;
18. Calls on the Member States to conduct research and compile comparable data concerning women and the media, including the portrayal of women from specific groups, such as women with disabilities or women belonging to ethnic minorities;

Education and training

19. Stresses the need for special career guidance courses in primary and secondary schools and higher education institutions, in order to inform young people about the negative consequences of gender stereotypes and encourage them to study for and embark on careers that have in the past been considered as typically 'masculine' or 'feminine'; asks that support be provided for any action aimed at reducing the prevalence of gender stereotypes among young children;
20. Stresses the importance of promoting equality between men and women from a very young age in order effectively to combat gender-based stereotypes, discrimination and violence, including through the teaching of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Charter on Human Rights in schools;
21. Emphasises the need for education programmes/curricula focusing on equality between men

¹ OJ C 304, 6.10.1997, p. 60.

and women, respect for others, respect amongst young people, respectful sexuality and rejection of all forms of violence, as well as the importance of training teachers in this subject;

22. Emphasises the need for a gender mainstreaming process in schools and therefore encourages schools to design and implement awareness training exercises and practical exercises designed to promote gender equality in the academic curriculum;
23. Stresses the need to prepare and introduce training courses for teachers, supervisors, head teachers and all other people involved in children's education so that they are equipped with all the teaching tools necessary to combat gender-based stereotypes and promote equality between men and women;
24. Points out that, although a majority of countries in the EU have gender-equality policies for higher education, almost all the policies and projects are focused on young women; calls, therefore, on the Member States to draw up general national strategies and initiatives combating gender stereotyping in higher education and targeting young men;
25. Calls for appropriate preparation of teachers and trainers in both formal and informal education through essential training in the area of equality between women/girls and men/boys and detection of and reaction to various types of abuse connected therewith and sexual violence;
26. Stresses that policies need to be drawn up which focus on deconstructing gender stereotypes from a very young age and on awareness training for teachers and students, and encourage and support career diversification for both young women and men;
27. Calls on the EU and the Member States to pursue active policies to ensure that girls from minority groups and girls from migrant communities have access to education and educational systems;
28. Calls on the Member States to assess the syllabus and content of school textbooks, with a view to a reform leading to the integration of gender issues into all education material as a cross-cutting theme, in terms of both eliminating gender stereotypes and making women's contribution and role in history, literature, the arts, etc. more visible, including at the earliest school levels;
29. Calls on the EU to promote a European dimension in education, e.g. by ensuring the sharing of good practices on gender equality as an education tool and by developing and gathering gender-sensitive statistics on all aspects of education at national and EU level;
30. Calls on the EU to include quantitative and qualitative gender equality indicators in all evaluation programmes aimed at evaluating the quality of education in European schools;

Labour market

31. Draws attention to the growing concern about the negative influence of gender stereotypes on the gender pay gap of 16,4 % and calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider this concern when developing new policies;
32. Stresses that the data available suggests that women are less well rewarded financially for

their qualifications and experience than men, partly because female employment has traditionally been considered as supplementary to the family income, a fact that has played a significant part in creating and maintaining the different salaries paid to men and women;

33. Stresses the need for awareness-raising activities in order to inform employers and employees of the link between gender stereotypes and the gender pay and job gap, to inform other stakeholders in society of the fact that gender stereotypes reduce women's opportunities both on the labour market and in their private lives, to encourage transparency in public and private companies and agencies, and to guarantee equal pay for equal work and work of equal value;
34. Calls on the Member States to review wage structures in female-dominated professions and occupations as a means of breaking down gender stereotypes anchored in the pay gap problem; calls on the Member States, employers and trade union movements to draft and implement serviceable, specific job evaluation tools to help determine work of equal value and thus to ensure equal pay between men and women;
35. Urges the Member States to establish policies to increase the number of inexpensive and high-quality childcare facilities available to working parents throughout Europe, and to help establish structures to enable parents working for companies to balance their family and professional lives, in particular by supporting the establishment and continuation of company childcare services; urges the Member States also to improve the provision of care facilities for other categories of dependants (old, disabled, people in need), thus encouraging women's active participation in labour, by reconciling work and family life;
36. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide flexible working opportunities and suitable forms of parental leave for both men and women;
37. Emphasises that gender stereotypes have a tendency to be self-fulfilling and that, if women are never given the chance to prove themselves, they will never manage to break the barriers blocking their way;
38. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage female entrepreneurship and self-employment schemes, providing appropriate training, funding and support;
39. Reminds the Commission that elderly women are particularly affected by the gender pay gap as it also affects pensions, which increases the risk of extreme and persistent poverty once women have reached retirement age;
40. Notes that the likelihood of elderly women ending up in poverty when they reach retirement age will increase as a result of the new EU pension rules; stresses, therefore, the importance of not supporting any amendments in the White Paper that increase the pension gap between men and women;
41. Calls on the Commission to assess the implementation of the EU Directive on sexual harassment at work and produce a report on shortcomings and challenges, in order to strengthen Member States' legislation and measures;

Economic and political decision-making

42. Draws attention to the fact that the representation of women in national governments stood

at 23 % in 2009 and supports the introduction of binding quotas in order to increase the number of women in national governments and parliaments and at regional and municipal levels, as well as in the EU institutions; also urges the introduction of awareness and incentive campaigns, encouraging women to be more politically active and to run for local or national government;

43. Recalls that the 2014 European elections, followed by the appointment of the next Commission and nominations for the EU 'top jobs', are a chance to move towards parity democracy at EU level and for the EU to be a role model in this field;
44. Calls on the Member States to support parity by proposing a woman and a man as their candidates for the office of European Commissioner; calls on the nominated President of the Commission to aim at parity when forming the Commission; calls on the present Commission to publicly support this procedure;
45. Recalls that, in 2010, only 12 % of the members of management boards in Europe were women; supports the Commission's desire to establish binding quotas for women in posts of responsibility in the largest listed companies;

Other actions

46. Calls on the Member States to reassess their approach to men and women in the labour market and to mechanisms that enable workers to establish a balance between work and family life, as stereotypes can increase occupational segregation and the gender pay gap;
47. Calls on the Member States to make combating violence against women a priority in penal policy; encourages Member States to develop, to this end, cooperation between their judicial authorities and national police services, and the exchange of good practice;
48. Stresses the need to combat all forms of violence against women; calls on the Commission and the Member States to embark on concerted action, including public awareness and information campaigns, on gender violence, as well as strategies aimed at changing the social stereotyping of women through education and the media, and to encourage the exchange of good practice; reiterates the need to work with both victims and aggressors, with a view to enhancing awareness among the latter and helping to change stereotypes and socially determined beliefs which help perpetuate the conditions that generate this type of violence and acceptance of it;
49. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, including by means of information campaigns celebrating women's role and involvement in politics, economics, society, sport, health, art, the sciences and at all other levels of society;
50. Considers that legislative and non-legislative measures are needed at both national and EU level to overcome stereotypes and close the wage gap, to enhance female participation in male-dominated sectors and to increase the recognition of women's skills and economic performance in the workplace, so as to overcome horizontal and vertical exclusion and increase the number of women in decision-making bodies in the political and business worlds;
51. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take decisive policy action to fight

gender stereotypes and encourage men to share equally in domestic and childcare responsibilities with women, in particular through incentives for men to take parental and paternity leave, which will strengthen their rights as fathers, ensure a greater degree of equality between women and men and more appropriate sharing of family and housekeeping responsibilities, and enhance women's opportunities to participate fully in the labour market; calls also on the Member States to persuade employers to adopt family-friendly measures;

52. Calls on the Commission and the national governments of the Member States to encourage more research on gender stereotyping and to collect further statistical data on gender stereotypes by developing appropriate indicators for gender stereotyping;
53. Reminds the Commission that gender equality is enshrined in Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;
54. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to support men's and women's employment potential in various professions, with a view to ensuring that the requirements of the labour market are met and that both genders enjoy equal opportunities;
55. Calls on the Commission to combat all forms of violence, discrimination and stereotyping against women so that they can fully enjoy all their human rights;
56. Calls on the Commission to urge the Member States to honour the commitments made in the European Pact for Gender Equality;
57. Encourages the European Institute for Gender Equality and different national gender equality institutes to promote further research on the root causes of gender stereotypes and the impact of stereotypes on gender equality, and stresses the importance of exchanging new ideas and research on best practices with a view to eliminating gender stereotypes in the Member States and the EU institutions;
58. Reminds the Commission of Parliament's resolution of 3 September 2008 on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men, and calls on it to implement the recommendations put forward in that resolution;
59. Calls on the EU and its Member States to carry out awareness-raising, education and training campaigns to combat discriminatory cultural norms and tackle the prevalent sexist stereotypes and social stigmatisation, which legitimise and perpetuate violence against women, and to ensure that there is no justification of violence on the grounds of customs, traditions or religious considerations;
60. Calls on the EU and its Member States to promote the sharing of good models, facilitate peer-learning among Member States and establish funding opportunities for EU-level and national campaigns to eliminate gender stereotypes;
61. Calls on the EU to fill the existing gap in scope between European legislation on racial and on sex-based discrimination and propose new legislation to ensure equality between women and men in education and the media;
62. Calls on the EU and its Member States to develop safeguards (in the form of ombudspersons or media-watch authorities incorporating gender equality experts) in order

to ensure that industrial codes of conduct include a gender equality perspective and are adhered to, and that the public can lodge complaints if necessary;

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63. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.