

Equality between women and men - 2007

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The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Piia-Noora **KAUPPI** (EPP-ED, FI) on the Commission report on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2007. It welcomed the efforts of the Commission to intensify its actions promoting equality, but stressed that further efforts and further measures to overcome outdated decision-making and behavioural patterns, particularly in the administrative sector, are required in order to improve gender mainstreaming across policy areas.

The Committee pointed out that gender mainstreaming at EU level is being conducted as a dual strategy seeking to ensure, on the one hand, equality for men and women in all policy areas and, on the other, targeted measures to curb discrimination against women. It called on the Commission to propose, in addition to the gender mainstreaming approach, a series of specific measures, including awareness-raising campaigns, the exchange of best practices, dialogues with citizens and public-private partnership initiatives. It also insisted on the need to have a clear and permanent link between the annual reports on equality and the priorities defined in the Roadmap in order to implement an efficient cycle of planning, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality policies. Member States were asked to put forward specific measures to combat inequalities between women and men caused by interrupted patterns of employment resulting in particular from maternity leave or leave to care for dependants and to reduce their negative effects on careers, wages and pension entitlements.

The Committee went on to ask the Commission to do the following:

- carry out a study on how Member States implement Community legislation in the area of equality and take appropriate action in the event of non-transposition or infringement;
- find appropriate means to combat the gender segregation of the labour market and to facilitate women's entry into non-traditional sectors;
- develop gender analysis and mainstreaming on the impact of pension reforms on women's lives in the EU with the objectives of individualising pensions rights and social security and tax systems;
- disseminate best practices with regard to working environment policies which allow for an effective work-life balance and with regard to measures fostering greater involvement by men in family life;
- take measures to reduce the gender pay gap and promote parental leave for men and paternity leave;
- cooperate with Member States to collect relevant data and to enforce measures that could prevent human trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour;
- focus on instruments and mechanisms for preventing the exploitation of migrant workers.

The Committee moved on to note that globalisation has been a positive force, empowering women all over the world to reach their potential, namely through improved access to education and healthcare. However, trade liberalisation has created contradictory and simultaneous trends, on the one hand effectively promoting the formalisation of labour relations in a number of areas, and, on the other, expanding the informal economy with new types of work and income for women, such as home-based work, sub-contracting and microenterprises. One effect of increased globalisation is the feminisation of poverty. The Committee asked the Commission to ensure that all future trade agreements, for example those within the framework of the WTO, are also scrutinised in the light of gender issues.

Specific attention should be paid to the situation of women belonging to ethnic minorities and of women immigrants. The Committee recommended the adoption of national integrated action plans in order to tackle multiple discrimination, especially where different bodies deal with discrimination issues in a particular Member State.

It asked Member States to do the following:

- develop specific gender equality objectives and targets within the EU Social Inclusion Strategy in order to combat poverty and social exclusion, including a set of policy actions to support non-traditional and one-parent families, and specific policy actions in support of groups of women who are at a high risk of poverty and social exclusion such as migrants, refugees, ethnic minority women, older women and disabled women;
- mutualise the costs of maternity and parental leave allowances in order to ensure that women no longer represent a more costly source of labour than men;
- combat, in conjunction with both sides of industry, discrimination against pregnant women on the labour market and to take all necessary steps to ensure a high level of protection for mothers. The Commission needs to make a more detailed assessment of compliance with Community law in this area and determine whether it needs to be revised.

The Committee insisted on the need to focus policies on combating gender stereotypes in education from an early age, eliminating them from school curricula and textbooks, providing awareness training to teachers and students and encouraging boys and girls to embrace non-traditional educational paths. It felt that the EU labour market in most EU countries does not adequately reflect higher average educational levels and better academic performance of women. Key competences, such as an entrepreneurial attitude and a scientific and technological approach should be reinforced, especially among women.

The need to improve the legal status of women working in agriculture was emphasised, both in relation to social security, and in relation to their role on the farms themselves, with particular emphasis on co-ownership of family farms, access to loans, and their rights in the context of inheritance law.

Lastly, the Committee observed the importance of having adequate comparable statistics and, in this context, deplored the invisibility of certain categories of person in European statistics, for example partners working on family farms, and asked EUROSTAT to include this category of person in its statistics.