

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2010/2138(INI)	Procedure completed
Equality between women and men in the European Union ? 2010		
Subject 4.10.04 Gender equality 4.15.08 Work, employment, wages and salaries: equal opportunities women and men, and for all		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		26/01/2010
		PPE GABRIEL Mariya	
		Shadow rapporteur S&D BLINKEVIČIŪTĒ Vilija	
Council of the European Union	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		21/01/2010
		ALDE HIRSCH Nadja	
European Commission	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs3073		07/03/2011
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	ANDOR László	

Key events			
19/12/2009	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2009)0694	Summary
09/09/2010	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
27/01/2011	Vote in committee		Summary
08/02/2011	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0029/2011	
07/03/2011	Debate in Council	3073	Summary
08/03/2011	Results of vote in Parliament		
08/03/2011	Debate in Parliament		
08/03/2011	Decision by Parliament	T7-0085/2011	Summary
08/03/2011	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2010/2138(INI)
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Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	FEMM/7/03584

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(2009)0694	19/12/2009	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE450.870	11/11/2010	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE454.717	17/12/2010	EP	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE452.786	25/01/2011	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0029/2011	08/02/2011	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0085/2011	08/03/2011	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2011)5426	12/09/2011	EC	

Equality between women and men in the European Union ? 2010

PURPOSE: to present the Commission report on equality between women and men - 2010.

CONTENT: in this year's report, the Commission notes that the current economic crisis has raised concerns that the achievements in gender equality in the EU are at risk and that the effects of the recession will put greater pressure on women. The downturn could be used as a reason to limit or cut gender equality measures, and analysis of national responses to the crisis confirms this risk. However, these times of crisis offer a unique opportunity for change, given that gender equality is a precondition for sustainable growth, employment, competitiveness and social cohesion. Policy makers have the opportunity to implement policies to make the labour market and society more gender-equal in the future.

Although the economic and social context has changed, the crisis has not altered the underlying challenges, such as the better functioning of labour markets, the sustainability and adequacy of social protection, the ageing of society. Gender equality policies are part of the response to these challenges but the crisis reinforces the need for these policies to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness.

Main developments

With regard to gender gaps, the report notes that this is a longer term challenge and progress is slow. Gender gaps persist as regards employment rates, pay, working hours, and positions of responsibility, share of care and household duties, and risk of poverty. The increasing participation of women in the labour market is a positive development, representing an important contribution to economic growth in the EU, accounting for a quarter of annual economic growth since 1995. The female employment rate increased by 7.1 percentage points over the last decade and reached 59.1 % in 2008, which is close to the Lisbon target (60 % in 2010), though this rate varies between Member States, from below 40 % to above 70 %. The average gap between female and male employment rates fell to 13.7 percentage points in 2008 from 18.2 points in 1998.

Interrupting this positive trend, however, the economic crisis has had serious repercussions on the labour market and unemployment figures. Between May 2008 and September 2009, the unemployment rate at EU level rose more rapidly for men (from 6.4 % to 9.3 %) than for women (7.4 % to 9 %). The male-dominated sectors of industry and construction have been hit hard. However, in recent months female and male unemployment rates have been increasing at the same pace, reflecting probably an extension of the crisis to other sectors, more gender-mixed than the ones first hit. Moreover, in a dozen Member States, unemployment remains higher among women. As women's jobs are concentrated in the public sector, they could be disproportionately affected by job losses due to budget cuts. Experience from past crises shows that men's employment generally recovers more quickly than women's. For persons who become unemployed, the risk of not being re-employed is higher for women. Women are more likely to have a disadvantaged position on the labour market e.g. due to higher incidence of precarious contracts, involuntary part-time and a persistent unfavourable pay gap (17.6 % on average in the EU in 2007), with repercussions on their lifetime earnings, social security protection and pensions, resulting in higher at-risk-of-poverty rates, especially once in retirement.

Women with children work less (-11.5 p.p. in the employment rate) than women without children, while men with children work more than men without children (+6.8 points). This strong influence of parenthood on employment participation is linked to traditional gender roles and the lack of childcare facilities in many

Member States. Despite an increase in the provision of childcare over the last few years, in line with the European targets, the coverage rates remain below these targets in many countries, especially for children under 3 years of age. Caring for other dependants also has a strong influence on the possibility of women and men remaining on the labour market, a challenge aggravated by the ageing of the population.

While there has been an increase in the number of women involved in decision making or appointed to decision-making posts in the EU over the last years, power is still firmly in men's hands in the political and economic spheres. Some progress came after the 2009 elections to the European Parliament, where the share of women rose from 31 % to 35 %. In the economic sector, figures are less positive and, for instance, women represent only one out of 10 board members in European blue-chip companies and 3 % among the leaders of the boards.

The report goes on to describe policy and legislative developments, noting that recent analysis of national responses to the crisis confirms the risk of downgrading the status of equality policies or reducing budgets allocated to these policies, and possible future cuts in public budgets may have a negative effect on female employment. It also notes the Council's political agreement on the proposal for a directive implementing the revised framework agreement on parental leave concluded by the European social partners, and the Commission's adoption of a proposal for a Council Framework Decision on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, and protecting victims.

Conclusion: in view of the contribution that gender equality can make to sustainable growth, employment, competitiveness and social cohesion, the Commission considers that the gender dimension should be strengthened in all parts of the post-Lisbon strategy. It invites the European Council to urge Member States to respond without delay to the challenges outlined in the report, in particular the following:

- strengthen the gender dimension in all parts of the [EU 2020 strategy](#), including more efficient use of gender mainstreaming, and specific actions and targets for gender equality within the European Employment Strategy;
- reduce the gender pay gap through specific strategies combining all available instruments, including targets where appropriate;
- ensure that diversity in boards of listed companies fosters a balanced and long-term oriented decision-making environment and that women are encouraged to take on the challenge of board membership in listed companies;
- improve reconciliation measures for both men and women, including family related leaves, care services, flexible working arrangements, and encourage equal sharing of private and family responsibilities, to facilitate full-time employment for both women and men;
- intensify efforts to prevent and combat gender-based violence;
- ensure that policies pay attention to women in particularly vulnerable positions ? for example, women in precarious jobs, older women workers, single parents, disabled women, migrant/ethnic minority and Roma women;
- ensure that the gender perspective is mainstreamed in the responses to the recession at the European and national levels, taking into account the differentiated impact of the crisis on women and men;
- renew the commitment taken by the Member States in the European Pact for Gender Equality and reinforce partnership and synergy between the European institutions, social partners and civil society.

In 2010, the European Commission will renew its commitment to promoting gender equality by adopting a gender equality strategy to follow up the current Roadmap for equality between women and men. The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs will also be updated and it is important that gender equality is consolidated in the EU 2020 strategy. 2010 is also the European Year dedicated to combating poverty and social exclusion, which will highlight the need for effective measures to include vulnerable groups. Lastly, it is the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform of Action when progress under the different areas for action will be assessed. This opens up the possibility to create stronger synergy between the different strategies to be revised in 2010.

Equality between women and men in the European Union ? 2010

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the report by Mariya NEDELICHEVA (EPP, BG) on equality between women and men in the EU ? 2010.

Members, firstly, note that there are still considerable inequalities between men and women with disparities in pay received by women and men still averaging 18% in the EU, exceeding 25% in certain countries. They also highlight the fact that the burden of domestic responsibilities is heavier on women than on men and that this situation has not been evaluated in any way. They also point out that, according to estimates, 20 to 25% of women in Europe suffer from physical violence during their lives. In view of these issues, they call for new measures to be taken to fight inequality.

Women are more affected by the crisis than men: Members stress that male-dominated sectors were the first to be hit by the crisis but that the crisis has since spread to more gender-mixed sectors, thus leading to greater female unemployment. They point out that, despite the stated intention of the Member States and the Commission, consistently equal conditions have not yet been achieved:

- more women than men are affected by poverty, unemployment and insecure employment;
- the risk of not being re-employed is higher among women than among men;
- economic recovery plans are focused on male-dominated sectors
- women are over-represented among those persons facing poverty.

In Members' opinion, the economic and financial crisis should be seen as a chance to put forward new and innovative proposals on women's employment, remuneration, working hours and the filling of positions of responsibility.

Strengthening inclusion measures in favour of women: Members call for targets to be set for women to be included in activities or sectors, or at levels, from which they have previously been excluded and in which they are still under-represented. They invite Member States in particular to ensure that the policies deployed to realise the objectives of the [Europe 2020 Strategy](#) in the areas of poverty and social inclusion are aimed at women in proportion to the share of people experiencing poverty that they represent.

Strengthen the place of women in the jobs market: Members point out that several studies have calculated that, if women's employment, part-time employment and productivity rates were similar to men's, the EU's GDP would increase by 30%. Equality between women and men, therefore, clearly has a positive effect on economic growth. This is the reason why they put forward a series of measures to promote

women's employment:

- to strengthen new sectors with a strong potential for job creation, such as ecology, the environment and new technologies;
- to fight to eradicate poverty, by revising Member States' macroeconomic, monetary, social and labour policies;
- to develop strategies to promote a fair distribution of income, guarantee minimum income, pay and decent pensions, create more high-quality jobs with rights for women, ensure access to high-quality public services for all women and young girls, and improve social welfare and respective local services, particularly crèches, nurseries,?

Most of the envisaged measures should come within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In this context, Members point out that demographic change makes it necessary to realise the potential of women, and to increase their employment in order to reach the target employment rate of 75% for women and men aged between 20 and 64, as provided for in the EU-2020 strategy. More generally, the Commission should strengthen the gender dimension in all parts of the EU-2020 strategy and favour binding proposals instead of non-binding strategies and policy documents in the field of gender equality.

Tackling the pay gap: among the issues that need to be campaigned on with force, Members mention the pay gap between men and women. By way of example, Members recall that more than 50 years since the inclusion in the Community treaties of the principle of equal pay for equal work, a female citizen in the EU has, on average, to work 418 calendar days to earn what a man earns in a calendar year. They regret the lack of debate on the subject and call on the Commission to take action without delay. They call on the Member States to increase their efforts to prevent segregation of job markets by gender and to counter the trend for many women to work in the worst-paid occupations. Several measures are proposed:

- the revision of the existing directive, drawing up phased sectoral plans with specific objectives, which could include reducing the pay gap to 0.5% by 2020;
- action on the issue of gender inequality in unpaid work, and the introduction of equality plans in companies and other workplaces;
- the introduction of measures aimed at solving the current paradox in which women, despite being better educated, are still less well paid than men;
- the application of the principle of gender equality to national pension systems as concerns both age and pay;
- the implementation of legislation on equal pay for equal work properly, and the application by the Commission of sanctions for non-compliant Member States;
- the launch of an EU-wide campaign on this question.

Balancing family and professional life: once again, Members call for concrete proposals with a view to achieving a better work-life balance, particularly with regard to help with care of dependent persons and child care. It is vital that the Commission ensures that the various European rules on work-life balance are correctly transposed by the Member States by adapting working conditions between men and women and that positive measures are introduced, notably in order to facilitate returning to work after a period devoted to the family (bringing up children and/or caring for a sick or disabled relative). They note that part-time employment can have an adverse impact on the individual concerned, for example by placing obstacles in the way of careers and leading to poverty in old age, or alternatively that they may, on account of smaller incomes, require supplementary State assistance for purposes of subsistence or in the event of illness or unemployment. In parallel, Member States are invited to encourage the setting up or improvement of childcare facilities and facilities for the elderly and other dependants with a view to providing good-quality, affordable services at times compatible with full-time working hours for as many people as possible. Members emphasise that the family is a cornerstone of our society and is inherently associated with the transmission of values and with cooperation in a spirit of solidarity. They underline that introducing flexible working hours and providing teleworking opportunities, as well as extending child care and professionalising home help for the elderly, represent an important step towards making it possible to combine work and family life and to enhance equal participation of women and men in the labour market and in education and training. They regret the fact that the lack of adequate leave schemes, parental leave schemes and flexible working arrangements for both parents, as well as the slowness in the change of mentalities in this regard.

Strengthening the presence of women in positions of responsibility: Members consider that there is a need to step up efforts at European level to increase women's representation in all spheres: in the European institutions, in business and in public administration. Members note in this regard the positive effects of the use of quotas on representation of women. They stress the need for the Member States to take steps, particularly through legislation, to set binding targets in this area.

Eliminating stereotypes: Members note that a lot of inequalities result from persistent stereotypes that need to be combated in particular by awareness campaigns in schools, workplaces and the media. They stress the importance of communication campaigns to ensure the gender neutrality of traditionally male or female trades or activities. They call on the Member States to ensure, through awareness programmes within the education sector, that girls are not steered automatically in the direction of traditionally feminised sectors and careers.

Combating violence against women: Members point out that violence against women is a major hindrance to gender equality. They call on the Commission to start drawing up a proposal for a comprehensive directive on preventing and combating all forms of violence against women ? whether physical, sexual or psychological ?, including trafficking. They urge the Member States to take measures to ensure access to support services aimed at preventing gender-based violence and welcome the establishment of a European protection order and the Directive on Human Trafficking. They call for the rapid entry into force of the latter. Once again, Members call for the launch of a European Year to combat violence against women, of a wide-ranging survey to determine the real scope of the problem in Europe, as well as better training for staff in the health sector, social services, the police and the judiciary, regarding all forms of violence against women, including rare forms of serious physical and psychological violence such as acid attacks.

Lastly, Members call for action in the following areas:

- the adequacy of women's pensions because women's careers are often interrupted to look after children and the sick;
- encouragement of women to take part in vocational training in the context of lifelong learning;
- the full recognition of women's rights in the agricultural sector;
- support for the employment of 'pregnant women or mothers performing domestic tasks on their own';
- particular attention to vulnerable groups of women: disabled, elderly, immigrant, lesbian, bisexual and transgender or those belonging to minorities, such as the Roms;
- better assistance in relation to reproductive health (the right of all women to contraception and abortion);
- integration of the gender dimension in the preparation of the European and national budgets.

Equality between women and men in the European Union ? 2010

The Council took note of the Commission's report (Commission Staff Working Paper: [Report on the progress on Equality between Women and Men in 2010](#)) and agreed to submit it to the European Council.

As requested by the European Council in Spring 2003, the Commission has submitted its annual report on equality between women and men.

The report describes recent developments in the field of gender equality in the EU and presents statistics on all areas covered, as well as recent developments in the Member States.

It sets out the state of play in the five priority areas defined in the Commission's strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, namely:

- equal economic independence;
- equal pay for equal work and work of equal value;
- equality in decision-making;
- dignity, integrity and an end to gender-based violence; and
- gender equality outside the Union.

The report will also be the basis of the discussions at the forthcoming high level gender dialogue announced by the Commission in its new Equality Strategy, in which the Commission President Barroso, Commission Vice President Reding and representatives of the Trio Presidency, the European Parliament, Social Partners and NGOs are to take part.

Equality between women and men in the European Union ? 2010

The European Parliament adopted by 366 votes to 200, with 32 abstentions, a resolution on equality between women and men in the EU ? 2010.

Parliament, firstly, notes that there are still considerable inequalities between men and women with disparities in pay received by women and men still averaging 18% in the EU, exceeding 25% in certain countries. It also highlights the fact that the burden of domestic responsibilities is heavier on women than on men and that this situation has not been evaluated in any way. It also points out that, according to estimates, 20 to 25% of women in Europe suffer from physical violence during their lives. In view of these issues, Parliament calls for new measures to be taken to fight inequality.

Women are more affected by the crisis than men: Parliament stresses that male-dominated sectors were the first to be hit by the crisis but that the crisis has since spread to more gender-mixed sectors, thus leading to greater female unemployment. It points out that, despite the stated intention of the Member States and the Commission, consistently equal conditions have not yet been achieved:

- more women than men are affected by poverty, unemployment and insecure employment;
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In Members' opinion, the economic and financial crisis should be seen as a chance to put forward new and innovative proposals on women's employment, remuneration, working hours and the filling of positions of responsibility.

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Strengthen the place of women in the jobs market: Parliament points out that several studies have calculated that, if women's employment, part-time employment and productivity rates were similar to men's, the EU's GDP would increase by 30%. Equality between women and men, therefore, clearly has a positive effect on economic growth. This is the reason why it put forward a series of measures to promote women's employment:

- to strengthen new sectors with a strong potential for job creation, such as ecology, the environment and new technologies;
- to fight to eradicate poverty, by revising Member States' macroeconomic, monetary, social and labour policies;
- to develop strategies to promote a fair distribution of income, guarantee minimum income, pay and decent pensions, create more high-quality jobs with rights for women, ensure access to high-quality public services for all women and young girls, and improve social welfare and respective local services, particularly crèches, nurseries,?

Most of the envisaged measures should come within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In this context, Parliament points out that demographic change makes it necessary to realise the potential of women, and to increase their employment in order to reach the target employment rate of 75% for women and men aged between 20 and 64, as provided for in the EU-2020 strategy.

Parliament points out that employment rates for both men and women are lower in rural areas and that this places those living in the countryside at a disadvantage in terms of the lack of availability of quality jobs. In addition, many women are not part of the official labour market and therefore do not count as registered unemployed, and are thus faced with financial and legal problems in terms of maternity rights, sick leave and acquisition of pension rights.

More generally, Parliament calls on the Commission, the Council and Member States to favour binding proposals instead of non-binding strategies and policy documents in the field of gender equality.

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Strengthening the presence of women in positions of responsibility: Parliament considers that there is a need to step up efforts at European level to increase women's representation in all spheres: in the European institutions, in business and in public administration. It notes in this regard the positive effects of the use of quotas on representation of women. It stresses the need for the Member States to take steps, particularly through legislation, to set binding targets in this area.

The resolution points out that only 3% of major companies are chaired by a woman and stresses the example of Norway, which since 2003 has successfully applied a quota policy to ensure parity on the management boards of companies, with this example now being followed by Spain and France. It calls on the Member States to take effective measures, such as quotas, to ensure greater representation for women in major listed companies and to take steps, particularly through legislation, to set binding targets to guarantee parity between men and women.

Eliminating stereotypes: Parliament notes that a lot of inequalities result from persistent stereotypes that need to be combated in particular by awareness campaigns in schools, workplaces and the media. It stresses the importance of communication campaigns to ensure the gender neutrality of traditionally male or female trades or activities. Members call on the Member States to ensure, through awareness programmes within the education sector, that girls are not steered automatically in the direction of traditionally feminised sectors and careers.

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- encouragement of women to take part in vocational training in the context of lifelong learning;
- the full recognition of women's rights in the agricultural sector;
- support for the employment of 'pregnant women or mothers performing domestic tasks on their own';
- particular attention to vulnerable groups of women: disabled, elderly, immigrant, lesbian, bisexual and transgender or those belonging to minorities, such as the Roma;
- better assistance in relation to reproductive health (the right of all women to contraception and abortion);
- integration of the gender dimension in the preparation of the European and national budgets;
- improve schemes helping women's organisations and civil society in general to collaborate with and participate in processes to integrate the gender perspective.