

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2021/2080(INI)	Procedure completed
Reaching women's economic independence through entrepreneurship and self-employment		
Subject		
3.45.06 Entrepreneurship, liberal professions		
4.10.09 Women condition and rights		
4.15.08 Work, employment, wages and salaries: equal opportunities women and men, and for all		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Women's Rights and Gender Equality	 WEISS Pernille	19/04/2021
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 BIEDROŃ Robert	
		 SOLÍS PÉREZ Susana	
		 PETER-HANSEN Kira	
		 STEGRUD Jessica	
		 MODIG Silvia	
European Commission	Commission DG Legal Service	Commissioner DALLI Helena	

Key events			
08/07/2021	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
22/03/2022	Vote in committee		
07/04/2022	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0096/2022	Summary
02/05/2022	Debate in Parliament		
03/05/2022	Decision by Parliament	T9-0139/2022	Summary

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2021/2080(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	FEMM/9/06099

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report		PE699.289	10/11/2021	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE702.913	07/12/2021	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0096/2022	07/04/2022	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0139/2022	03/05/2022	EP	Summary

Reaching women's economic independence through entrepreneurship and self-employment

The Committee on Womens Rights and Gender Equality adopted an own-initiative report by Pernille WEISS (EPP, DK) on reaching womens economic independence through entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Entrepreneurship and self-employment play an important role in creating jobs, innovation and growth to strengthen EUs competitiveness. Unfortunately, women remain substantially under-represented as entrepreneurs. They constitute 52 % of the total European population, but only 34.4 % of the EU self-employed and 30 % of start-up entrepreneurs. Moreover, less than 8 % of top companies CEOs are women.

Womens economic independence and empowerment is central to realising womens rights and gender equality and includes the ability to participate equally in labour markets, access to and control over productive resources and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels. Women entrepreneurs and self-employed women are an under-utilised source of sustainable economic growth, job creation and innovation potential.

Promoting entrepreneurship

The report underlined that womens entrepreneurship contributes to increasing womens economic independence and their empowerment, which is an essential precondition for reaching gender-equal societies and should be encouraged and promoted across the EU. In this regard, the Commission is called on to:

- step up its efforts to increase the employment rate of women in Europe and facilitate their access to the labour market, including by providing more incentives to promote womens entrepreneurship;
- strengthen networks focusing on womens entrepreneurship on European level to boost innovation and cooperation between national, EU and international networks;
- highlight prominent women entrepreneurs and investors as role models by launching a Europe-wide campaign raising awareness about the potential of entrepreneurship targeting predominantly women;

While welcoming public and private womens entrepreneurship programmes in the Member States that include aspects of networking, mentoring, training, coaching and consultancy services and professional advice on legal and fiscal matters, Members called on the Commission and Member States to share best practices to strengthen and increase the share of women entrepreneurs and self-employed within the EU.

The report called for greater women-focused promotion of and awareness-raising about STEM subjects, digital education and financial literacy in order to combat prevailing stereotypes in education, training, school curricula and career guidance.

Members regretted the fact that women are under-represented in leadership positions and highlighted the need to promote equality between men and women at all levels of decision-making in business and management and called for the development of a strategy with Member States to ensure the meaningful representation of all women from diverse backgrounds in decision-making roles and with specific actions and policies to promote their economic empowerment.

Access to capital

Noting that women entrepreneurs are more likely to use alternative sources such as crowd lending and funding platforms, the report called on Member States and the Commission to boost awareness and facilitate easier access to finance for women entrepreneurs and self-employed including alternative forms of financing. The important role of microcredits in improving womens financial inclusion by overcoming market and social barriers in the financial markets is underlined in the report.

Member States and regional and local authorities are encouraged to make use of the current European Structural Funds to target and promote

women entrepreneurs and self-employed women. In addition, the Commission is urged to establish a European network of gender-conscious investors to provide women-led companies with relevant connections, networks and funding opportunities.

The report also stressed the need for awareness-raising and information campaigns on current and future EU funding possibilities for women entrepreneurs to provide tailored support to women business owners and women entrepreneurs and increase the visibility of women leaders so they can provide stronger role models and break current stereotypes. In this regard, the Commission is urged to establish a women's entrepreneurship action plan.

Better framework for women entrepreneurs

Members emphasised the need to remove administrative barriers to starting a business to make becoming an entrepreneur or self-employed more attractive to women, including also immigrant women. They called on Member States to consider developing standardised administrative packages for entrepreneurs to follow in the early stages of starting a business. There is a need for guidance and simplified forms, procedures and processes to help self-employed women entrepreneurs navigate the regulatory landscape.

Member States should also consider enhanced tax incentives or flexible tax structures to improve framework conditions for entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Recognising that female entrepreneurship and self-employment provide the flexibility to achieve a better work-life balance, the report called on the Commission and Member States to ensure a better work-life balance through better maternity, paternity, parental and carers leave, flexible working hours and on-site childcare facilities, and by promoting telework.

Reaching women's economic independence through entrepreneurship and self-employment

The European Parliament adopted by 542 votes to 43 with 52 abstentions a resolution on reaching women's economic independence through entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Women entrepreneurs and self-employed workers represent an under-exploited source of sustainable economic growth, job creation and innovation potential. Yet women represent only 34.4% of the self-employed in the EU and 30% of its young entrepreneurs. Furthermore, less than 8% of CEOs of large companies are women and only 10% of the top positions in private equity and venture capital firms globally are held by women.

Entrepreneurship programmes, education and skills development

The resolution underlined that women's entrepreneurship contributes to increasing women's economic independence and their empowerment, which is an essential precondition for reaching gender-equal societies and should be encouraged and promoted across the EU. In this regard, the Commission is called on to:

- step up its efforts to increase the employment rate of women in Europe and facilitate their access to the labour market, including by providing more incentives to promote women's entrepreneurship;
- strengthen networks focusing on women's entrepreneurship on European level to boost innovation and cooperation between national, EU and international networks;
- implement programmes to encourage creativity in innovation, ensure entrepreneurship in the labour market and ensure that women can bring added value to society;
- highlight prominent women entrepreneurs and investors as role models by launching a Europe-wide campaign raising awareness about the potential of entrepreneurship targeting predominantly women.

For their part, Member States are invited to introduce business-friendly reforms to encourage equality and female entrepreneurship.

While welcoming public and private women's entrepreneurship programmes in the Member States that include aspects of networking, mentoring, training, coaching and consultancy services and professional advice on legal and fiscal matters, Members called on the Commission and Member States to analyse the impact of women's entrepreneurship programmes and share best practices to strengthen and increase the share of women entrepreneurs and self-employed within the EU.

The resolution called for greater women-focused promotion of and awareness-raising about STEM subjects, digital education and financial literacy in order to combat prevailing stereotypes in education, training, school curricula and career guidance.

Members regretted the fact that women are under-represented in leadership positions and highlighted the need to promote equality between men and women at all levels of decision-making in business and management and called for the development of a strategy with Member States to ensure the meaningful representation of all women from diverse backgrounds in decision-making roles and with specific actions and policies to promote their economic empowerment.

Parliament called on the Member States and the Commission to facilitate simplified access to finance for female entrepreneurs and self-employed workers, including non-conventional forms of finance such as equity loans. It suggested using the existing European Structural Funds to target and promote female entrepreneurs and self-employed women. It also highlighted the important role of micro-credit in improving women's financial inclusion.

The Commission is urged to establish a European network of gender-conscious investors to provide women-led companies with relevant connections, networks and funding opportunities.

Members also stressed the need for awareness-raising and information campaigns on current and future EU funding possibilities for women entrepreneurs to provide tailored support to women business owners and women entrepreneurs and increase the visibility of women leaders so they can provide stronger role models and break current stereotypes. In this regard, the Commission is urged to establish a women's entrepreneurship action plan.

Better framework for women entrepreneurs

Members emphasised the need to remove administrative barriers to starting a business to make becoming an entrepreneur or self-employed

more attractive to women, including also immigrant women. They called on Member States to consider developing standardised administrative packages for entrepreneurs to follow in the early stages of starting a business. There is a need for guidance and simplified forms, procedures and processes to help self-employed women entrepreneurs navigate the regulatory landscape.

Member States should also consider enhanced tax incentives or flexible tax structures to improve framework conditions for entrepreneurship and self-employment.

Recognising that female entrepreneurship and self-employment provide the flexibility to achieve a better work-life balance, the resolution called on the Commission and Member States to ensure a better work-life balance through better maternity, paternity, parental and carers leave, flexible working hours and on-site childcare facilities, and by promoting telework.