

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3(2) and 141 of the EC Treaty,
 - 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 - 2007 ("the Commission report on equality") (COM(2007)0049),
 - having regard to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005) (COM(2000)0335) and the Commission's annual reports for 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2006 (COM(2001)0179, COM(2002)0258, COM(2003)0098, COM(2004)0115, COM(2005)0044 and COM(2006)0071),
 - having regard to the European Pact for Gender Equality, adopted by the European Council in March 2006,
 - having regard to the common declaration adopted on 4 February 2005 by the ministers of the EU Member States responsible for gender equality policies,
 - having regard to the Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010 (COM(2006)0092),
 - having regard to the opinion on gender pay gap adopted by the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men on 22 March 2007,
 - having regard to the framework of actions on gender equality, adopted by the European social partners on 22 March 2005,
 - having regard to Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union(1) ,
 - 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 and the opinions of the Committee on Regional Development, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0290/2007),
- A. whereas the Commission and the Member States have recently renewed their commitment to gender equality, namely with the abovementioned Roadmap for equality between women and men and the European Pact for Gender Equality,
- B. whereas there is a clear gender dimension to the demographic challenge facing Europe and gender equality policies are fundamental to meeting that challenge,
- C. whereas gender mainstreaming means, in practice, assessing how political, administrative and social measures impact on the lives and situations of both women and men and, where necessary, taking responsibility for revisiting those measures with a view to promoting gender equality,
- D. whereas the reconciliation of professional, family and private life for both women and men is essential to promoting the entry, re-entry and permanent presence of women in the labour market; whereas responsibility for children is a responsibility shared between parents irrespective of sex,
- E. whereas segregation in education, persistent gender stereotyping in the choice of fields of study and discrimination against girls and young women in education remain widespread and have negative

consequences for the comparative position of women in certain sectors of the labour market, particularly those relating to advanced technology, science, research and engineering,

F. whereas, at the European Council of March 2006, the Council once again recognised that policies on gender equality are essential instruments for economic growth,

G. whereas gender mainstreaming is specified as a key requirement in the Lisbon Agenda, and whereas gender mainstreaming is still underdeveloped and often absent from National Action Plans for employment and social inclusion,

H. whereas the Commission's report on equality highlights the positive result achieved as regards female employment rates, in that six million of the eight million jobs created in the EU since 2000 have been taken up by women but states at the same time that there are significant variations in the employment rates of different age groups as well as between occupations, with female employment rates having risen mainly in those sectors where women were already in a majority; whereas it is deplorable that the majority of new jobs for women are part-time jobs and some of them are unsafe and insecure jobs which pay low - and slowly increasing - wages,

I. whereas the Commission's report on employment in Europe 2006 shows that 32.3 % of women in employment in the EU have a part-time job compared to only 7.4 % of men,

J. whereas no substantial developments have been made since the previous report with regard to the gender pay gap (which averages at 15 % across the EU and remains up to 30 % in some European countries), which clearly demonstrates that there has been no real progress in the implementation of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, a principle 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 women⁽²⁾ ; whereas the distribution of wealth between men and women in the EU is also unequal,

K. whereas a 2003 Eurobarometer survey showed that the main factors deterring fathers from taking on more domestic and family responsibilities are not only of a financial nature but also concern the fear that doing so may have negative consequences for career development,

L. whereas long-term unemployment is proportionally higher among women and whereas responsibility for children aged 5 and under is linked to a higher rate of unemployment than in the case of women without children,

M. whereas adequate access to services for the care of children, the elderly and other dependants is essential in order to permit the full and equal participation of men and women in the labour market,

N. whereas Member States that have adopted reconciliation policies for both women and men have higher birth rates, a higher percentage of women in the labour market and higher employment rates,

O. whereas social partners play an important role in defining actions for gender equality at the European, national, regional, sectoral and corporate levels, and successful reconciliation policies require a partnership between employers, trade union organisations, employees and public authorities,

P. whereas best practices show that reconciliation actions at the microeconomic level result in lower staff turnover and absenteeism, higher commitment and productivity, and attract an efficient and motivated workforce,

Q. whereas Article 16(1) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund⁽³⁾ provides that the Member States and the Commission are to ensure that equality

between men and women and the integration of the gender perspective are promoted during the various stages of implementation of those funds,

1. Welcomes the efforts of the Commission to intensify its actions promoting equality between women and men;
2. Welcomes the focus of the Commission's report on equality as regards employment issues such as the gender pay gap, reconciliation and the equal treatment directives, since economic independence for women is one of the priorities of the Roadmap for equality between women and men;
3. Welcomes the culture of equality in the EU, including the Commission's Roadmap for equality and the Council's Pact for Gender Equality, and calls for its practical implementation by way of concrete measures and allocation of financial resources;
4. Stresses that further efforts and additional 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;
5. Points 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 and decision-making areas and, on the other, targeted measures to curb discrimination against women;
6. Calls 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;
7. Recognises the potential of social cohesion policy for promoting equality;
8. Insists 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 ensure an efficient cycle of planning, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality policies; encourages the Commission to work towards achieving this cycle;
9. Recalls its request in its resolution of 2 February 2006 on equality between women and men in the European Union⁽⁴⁾ that the Commission monitor compliance by the Member States with the acquis communautaire in the area of equality between women and men in all policies, particularly employment policies but also those concerning access to and the provision of goods and services; calls, therefore, on the Commission to carry out a study on how Member States implement Community legislation in the area of equality and to take appropriate action in the event of non-transposition or infringement;
10. Calls on the Member States to support the Commission in monitoring the implementation of national measures in order to assess the effectiveness of policies and whether the principle of equality is being upheld, in particular with regard to statutory entitlements and pension and social security schemes;
11. Calls on the Member States to propose 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, and to work towards gender-neutral wages and pensions; calls on the Commission to find appropriate means to combat the gender segregation of the labour market and to facilitate women's entry into non-traditional sectors;

12. Calls on the Commission to carry out gender analysis and mainstreaming in order to establish the impact of pension reforms on women's lives in the EU, with the aim of individualising pensions rights and social security and tax systems;

13. Welcomes the consultation procedure with the social partners launched by the Commission in order to improve both the legislative and non-legislative frameworks for reconciling professional, family and private life; encourages the Commission to launch forthwith the second phase of the consultation;

14. Calls on the Commission to gather information on, and disseminate best practice examples of policies relating to the working environment which allow for an effective work-life balance and which include measures for fostering greater involvement by men in family life; calls on the Member States and the social partners to take the necessary measures to be able partly to prevent, and partly to intervene, in order to deal with sexual and moral harassment in the workplace; insists that women must be supported in their professional careers; urges the Commission and the Member States to take measures to reduce the gender pay gap and to promote both parental leave for men and paternity leave;

15. Notes that the reconciliation of work, private and family life is an important issue and one of the keys to increasing employment and reducing the burden of demographic ageing; points out that all policies in this area must be based on the principle of free personal choice and be geared to the various stages in life;

16. Regrets the fact that the Commission omitted to consult the social partners when drafting the Green Paper on modernising labour law (COM(2006)0708);

17. Notes that globalisation has been a force for good, allowing women all over the world to reach their potential, namely through improved access to education and health-care; notes, however, that 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 through new types of work and income for women, such as home-based work, sub-contracting and micro-enterprises;

18. Notes that one effect of increased globalisation is the feminisation of poverty and that thorough research should be carried out in order to ascertain the total impact of globalisation on women's ability to earn a living;

19. Calls on 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;

20. Calls on the Commission to focus specifically on the barriers deterring women from gaining access to top jobs, in order to assess the structural dimension of this phenomenon; welcomes, therefore, measures to help women enter the labour market on an equal par with men and to promote female entrepreneurship and insists on the importance of eliminating existing prejudices and gender discrimination regarding the competitiveness and employability of women, especially in high-level jobs;

21. Emphasises the need to address the major democratic deficit relating to women's under-representation in political decision-making, and calls on the Member States to investigate the factors that prevent women from participating fully in the political arena and from gaining senior management roles in all levels of public administration, and calls for measures to be taken to remedy such situations;

22. Calls for specific attention to be paid to the situation of women belonging to ethnic minorities and of female immigrants, as their marginalisation is reinforced by multiple discrimination from both

outside and within their own communities; recommends the adoption of national integrated action plans in order to effectively tackle multiple discrimination, especially where different bodies deal with discrimination issues in a particular Member State;

23. Highlights the importance of ensuring that immigrants entering the EU are aware of the values and existing laws and social conventions relating to gender equality in the society of the host country so as to avoid situations of discrimination which result from a lack of cultural awareness;

24. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to intensify the exchange of best practices on non-discrimination in the labour market in order to foster the equality-efficiency dynamic in respect of national specificities;

25. Calls on the Member States to 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;

26. Urges the Commission to cooperate with Member States in the collection of relevant data and in the enforcement of measures that could prevent human trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour;

27. Calls on the Commission to focus on instruments and mechanisms for preventing the exploitation of migrant workers, including the recognition and enforcement of fundamental human rights of irregular migrants instead of relying on repression;

28. Urges the Member States to 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;

29. Calls on the Member States to combat, in conjunction with both sides of industry, discrimination against pregnant women in the labour market and to take all necessary steps to ensure a high level of protection for mothers; calls on the Commission to make a more detailed assessment of compliance with Community law in this area and to determine whether it needs to be revised;

30. Notes with concern that, despite all the progress made, women, especially elderly women and single mothers, are still at risk of exclusion and poverty;

31. Calls on the Member States and the social partners to pursue the objective of making it possible for all women who seek full-time work to be offered such work rather than part-time jobs, which are often unsafe and insecure;

32. Welcomes the Commission's efforts to give new impetus to reaching the targets agreed upon by the 2002 European Council in Barcelona, of eliminating obstacles to the equal participation of women and men in the labour market and of introducing, by 2010, childcare for 90 % of children between the age of three and mandatory school age, and at least 33 % of children under three years old, particularly through the use of structural funds; encourages the Commission to present in 2008, as planned, a communication setting out further steps to be taken at all levels in order to reach these targets; considers that the aim should be to give all children the right to high-quality care, incorporating an educational element;

33. Considers that Member States have a responsibility to ensure that everybody who requires geriatric care or care on grounds of illness or disability has access to high-quality care and treatment;

34. Insists on the need to develop policies that focus on combating gender stereotypes in education from an early age, including 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;
35. Calls on the Commission to establish a dialogue with, and provide encouragement to, the media, given their influential role in the field of social responsibility, in order to promote gender equality and prevent the stereotyped portrayal of women and men;
36. Recommends the development of pan-European measures in order to increase awareness of a zero-tolerance stance towards sexist insults and degrading representations of women in the media and in commercial communications;
37. Recommends that the different individual needs of girls and boys, in terms of their development, should be taken into account to a greater extent in education, and that, in doing so, stereotypes should be counteracted;
38. Considers that the labour market in most EU countries does not adequately reflect the superior level of education reached by women nor does it reflect women's better academic performance;
39. Recommends working towards ensuring that school education promotes knowledge and fixes sensible criteria in order to make it possible to achieve freedom, personal autonomy, as well as equity so as to achieve social inclusion for women; further believes that so-called key competences, such as an entrepreneurial attitude and a scientific and technological approach, should be reinforced, especially among women;
40. Stresses the need for training measures to be provided during parental leave in order to help women cope with changing job requirements;
41. Observes the importance of having adequate comparable statistics and, in this context, deplors the invisibility of certain categories of person in European statistics, for example partners working on family farms, who, if they are women, are generally recorded as "housewives"; calls on Eurostat to include this category of person in its statistics in order to raise the profile of women's work;
42. Stresses that, in the agricultural sector, women often do a significant proportion of the work as family workers; considers that this work could also be appropriately taken into account in rural development policy;
43. Draws attention to the large number of (mostly female) partners working on family farms, whose legal status is uncertain in many Member States, which can give rise to specific financial and legal problems with regard to access to maternity leave and sick leave, the accumulation of pension entitlements and access to social security, as well as in the event of divorce;
44. Stresses the need to improve the legal status of women working in the agricultural sector, both in relation to social security, by ensuring that they all have direct access thereto, 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;
45. Draws attention in this connection to its resolution of 21 February 1997 on the situation of the assisting spouses of the self-employed(5) , in which it called for an improvement in the circumstances of assisting spouses in agriculture, to be achieved by strengthening Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1986 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood(6) , to that end laying down a legal status for

assisting spouses whereby, instead of being denied recognition as workers, they would belong to social security schemes in order to qualify for sickness, invalidity, and accident insurance and an old age pension;

46. Draws attention to the high levels of poverty and degrees of isolation affecting women in some rural areas; points to the need for effective measures to guarantee equal opportunities for women, an aim which should be central to all the measures provided for under the common agricultural policy and to other relevant Community policies;

47. Considers it vital to improve the quality of life for women living in rural areas by enabling them to gain access more easily to education and vocational training, lifelong learning, new media infrastructures, the necessary efficient local public health services, and locally based facilities and amenities for children and families, including crèches, nurseries, schools, arts centres, and markets;

48. Emphasises the need for the European Social Fund to support specific measures that improve women's access to, and participation in, the labor market as well as gender mainstreaming; considers that regional funds should have a gender budget line (gender budgeting) for the funding of measures designed to promote gender equality and surveys assessing the impact of policies relating to the situation of women;

49. Recalls that there is a need to incorporate new approaches and innovative instruments into regional development strategies and stresses the need to provide training in gender mainstreaming methodology and tools for decision-makers at regional and local levels; calls on the Commission to further develop its guidelines for the administrative sector on gender mainstreaming for structural fund purposes;

50. 50 Asks the Commission, with the help of the European Institute for Gender Equality, to include facts and statistics from acceding and candidate countries in future annual reports on equality between women and men;

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

(1) OJ C 364, 18.12.2000, p. 1.

(2) OJ L 45, 19.2.1975, p. 19.

(3) OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25.

(4) OJ C 288 E, 25.11.2006, p. 73.

(5) OJ C 85, 17.3.1997, p. 186.

(6) OJ L 359, 19.12.1986, p. 56.