

UNIT 6 GENDER EQUALITY

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2010 (2010/2138(INI)) – EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The current economic, financial and social crisis is having disastrous repercussions for employment, living conditions and our societies at large. Women have been severely affected by the crisis, particularly in terms of their working conditions, their access to employment, their place in society as a whole and gender equality. The Commission rightly listed, in its 2010 annual report, the remaining challenges we have to address regarding gender equality as we emerge from the crisis.

Your rapporteur stresses the need for a targeted response addressing the real effects of the crisis on women, which concerned, first and foremost, female employment. As a whole, women's employment was affected later than men's because women make up the majority of the workforce in sectors that were initially more resistant to the crisis (health, education, social welfare, etc.). The effects on these sectors, however, could well prove longer lasting, thus making women's employment less secure than men's. Women have therefore been hard hit in terms of their working or recruitment conditions and access to employment and could see their circumstances get worse if specific measures are not implemented quickly. Indeed, women remain relegated to part-time work on fixed-term contracts with often insufficient pay and are, for the most part, at a disadvantage on the labour market. Gender equality in employment needs to become an established reality, rather than merely a trend. It is therefore important that the governments of the Member States and the Commission continue to implement gender equality policies and refrain from reducing the budgets earmarked for them.

However, the crisis should not be seen from a wholly negative perspective. It should be seen as a chance for governments to ask the right questions and look at their policies in a new light. The crisis must be the catalyst for us to reconsider the respective roles of men and women in our societies, a process that would entail, among other things, fully incorporating gender equality into all policies. This ideal of equality should be achieved by means of concrete, lasting measures notably concerning education. Children must be familiarised with the principle of gender equality from a very early age so as to banish sexist stereotypes. Whether in the form of ongoing information programmes, awareness-raising campaigns or guiding boys and girls away from

sectors traditionally reserved either for men or for women, education and training for young people is the key to equality.

Your rapporteur would also like to stress the importance of the role of women in decision-making positions, which are traditionally the preserve of men. Whether on the boards of publicly listed companies or in the world of politics, women must be able to attain posts in line with their skills. Although often better qualified than men, women are sometimes denied access to positions of responsibility, leading to a mismatch between their levels of training and their status.

There is also a need to strengthen the gender dimension in the fight against poverty. As 2010 is the European Year for Combating Poverty, particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable groups of women. Specific measures should be taken to stop women vulnerable on account of a disability or their status as immigrants or minorities falling into precarious situations, and to facilitate their integration into society. Your rapporteur therefore advises the Commission that a significant part of the EU strategy on Roma inclusion should concern the integration of Roma women.

The promotion of equality also involves combating violence against women. All forms of physical, sexual or psychological violence, however serious, must be combated and condemned. Combating gender-based violence entails launching awareness-raising campaigns and teaching children and young people about the horrors of this violence. Condemning gender-based violence entails defining it in the eyes of the law and ensuring that the punishment fits the crime. For example, acid attacks are a form of violence that is still regrettably prevalent in certain Member States. Taboos continue to be associated with certain forms of violence in our societies. Information on these forms of violence is scarce and there is, therefore, little awareness of their psychological or physical consequences which are, however, considerable.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/femm/pr/834/834921/834921en.pdf

GLOSSARY

to list = elencare

rapporteur = relatore

targeted = mirato a

to make (made, made) up = comporre

to hit (hit, hit) = colpire

recruitment = assunzione, ingaggio

fixed-term = a tempo determinato

to earmark = assegnare

lasting = duraturo

to banish = bandire, eliminare

ongoing = continuo

to stress = sottolineare

preserve = campo

mismatch = discrepanza

to strengthen = potenziare, rafforzare

***to advise** = raccomandare, consigliare

to concern = riguardare

to entail = comportare, implicare

to fit = corrispondere a

regrettably = purtroppo

LANGUAGE NOTES

The term *rapporteur* (derived from French) is used in international and European legal and political contexts to refer to a person appointed by a deliberative body to investigate an issue or a situation. In this context, it refers to the author of a report prepared by a committee of the European Parliament.

The expression *first and foremost* means “first of all, most importantly”: *The priorities of the Refugee Council are children first and foremost.*

The verb *to make up* can have different meanings. In this context, it means “to compose”. It can mean “to invent”: *He made up a ridiculous story.* It can also mean “to apply cosmetics”: *She made herself up very carefully.*

The verb forms *combating* and *combated* are usually spelled with a single *t*, although the spellings *combatting* and *combatted* are also correct.

A *publicly listed company* is a company that has issued shares to the public (and thus has public ownership) and is now listed on a stock exchange (società quotata in borsa).

The phrase *The punishment should fit the crime* translates as *La pena dovrebbe essere commisurata al reato.*

The *Roma* (rom) are also known as gypsies and live primarily in Central and Eastern Europe.

The verb *to advise* translates as *consigliare* rather than *avvisare* (to inform, to warn). *Advice* is one of the several nouns that are countable in Italian but uncountable in English. They have no plural form and the verb that follows them is always singular: *His advice is always good.*

The indefinite article *a* is never used:

I'd like some advice. Have they given you any advice?

If it is necessary to specify the singular, the expression *a piece of* may be used: *He gave me a piece of good advice.*

Some other uncountable nouns in English are: *behaviour, business, furniture, information, luggage/baggage, money, music, news, progress, travel, research, work.*

COMPREHENSION

Choose ONE of the alternatives.

1. The main aim of the text is to urge governments to ...
 - a. give more jobs to women.
 - b. promote equality for women in all sections of society.
 - c. make people aware of gender equality.
2. According to the text, the current crisis has hit hardest women's ...
 - a. living conditions.
 - b. employment.
 - c. position in society.
3. Women's jobs were affected later than men's because ...
 - a. the sectors in which they worked were more secure initially.
 - b. women last longer in jobs than men.
 - c. specific measures were implemented to help women.
4. The text recommends the European governments to ...
 - a. introduce gender equality policies.
 - b. make gender equality policies permanent.
 - c. follow gender equality trends.
5. According to the text, the current crisis...
 - a. offers the chance for governments to examine their gender policies.
 - b. has a negative impact on education.
 - c. has a positive impact on the role of women in high level jobs.

VOCABULARY

Exercise 1 Find words in text that mean the following:

1. fairness
2. deal with
3. get rid of

4. make stronger
5. limited

Exercise 2 Complete the sentences with the appropriate word to form compounds with the word *pay*.

day	freeze	gap	rise	scale
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1. UNISON health workers have rejected a two-year pay _____.
2. The gender pay _____ is the difference between male and female earnings
3. Follow our quick advice on how to get a pay _____.
4. A pay _____ loan is a small, short-term loan that is intended to cover a borrower's expenses until his or her next pay day.
5. A range of wage levels, varying according to job title, salary or length of service, is called a pay _____.

Exercise 3 Uncountable nouns.

Correct the mistakes in the following sentences.

1. We didn't earn many money working in America.
2. You are making great progresses in your English.
3. Put the luggages in the hall.
4. They gave me a useful information.
5. The news are not good.

UN SAYS SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION IS RIFE IN BRITAIN

British women are under-represented in Parliament, paid less than men at work and increasingly being sent to prison for committing minor offences, a report on sex discrimination has found. The report, which was published by an influential committee of the United Nations, paints a damning picture of daily life for women living in the UK who continue to fight for a fairer deal in society.

Calling on Britain to do more to improve the standing of women, the committee argues for “benchmarks and concrete timetables” to increase the number of women in political and public life and to use “special measures” to promote women to positions of leadership. Only one in five members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords is a woman.

The UN’s Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is also critical of what it describes as “gender segregation” in the workplace. In its report it says that its members are concerned about the “persistence of occupational segregation between women and men in the labour market and the continuing pay gap, one of the highest in Europe”.

The average hourly earnings of full-time female employees amount to approximately 83 per cent of men’s earnings, according to the findings. In its report, the UN also highlights the need for greater measures to tackle violence against women and the practice of forced marriages.

Amnesty International UK highlighted the committee’s concerns about the discrimination against asylum-seekers. Liz McKean, Amnesty International’s gender policy adviser, said: “We’re delighted that the UN committee underlined the UK’s need to review its policy to protect women who are victims of violence but who currently have ‘no recourse to public funds’ because of their insecure immigration status ... We would urge the UK Government to heed the United Nations’ call to re-assess their policy so as to ensure that all women, regardless of their status, can access adequate protection and the support they need.”

Amnesty said that it strongly supported the committee’s recommendation that the British Government implement a national strategy to eliminate violence against women and girls. It added: “We would urge the Government to heed the recommendations offered by the UN committee and to redress these failings.”

Although the committee acknowledges the work already done by the Government in bringing in new laws and policies to combat discrimination in public life and the workplace, the committee wants to see more being done across a broad number of issues.

It recommends: “To that end, the committee urges the state party (UK) to increase the availability of training and capacity-building programmes for women wishing to enter or already in public office.” The report also highlights the treatment of women in prison. The authors say too many women are being

sent to jail for failing to pay their TV licences or committing other minor offences.

The committee urges the Government to “intensify its efforts to reduce the number of women in conflict with the law, including through targeted prevention programmes aimed at addressing the causes of women’s criminality.”

Specifically, the UN wants to see “alternative sentencing and custodial strategies, including community interventions and services, for women convicted of minor offences”.

Robert Verkaik, Law Editor
The Independent Newspaper
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/un-says-sexual-discrimination-is-rife-in-britain-915800.html>

GLOSSARY

rife = diffuso

offence = reato

to paint a picture = rappresentare

damning = incriminante

fair deal = trattamento equo

standing = posizione

benchmark = punto di riferimento

timetable = programma

workplace = luogo di lavoro

pay gap = differenza di stipendio

earnings = salario, stipendio

to highlight = mettere in rilievo

to tackle = affrontare

to urge = raccomandare

to heed = tenere conto di

to re-assess = riesaminare

to redress = riparare, compensare

failing = lacuna

to acknowledge = riconoscere

custodial strategy = strategia detentiva

community intervention = lavoro socialmente utile

to be convicted = essere condannato

LANGUAGE NOTES

In everyday English, *to argue* means “to exchange conflicted views in an intense way” (litigare): *I argued with my parents last night*. In formal English, *to argue* means “to give reasons in support of a certain position” (sostenere, argomentare). You can argue *for* (a favore di) or *against* (contro) an idea or position.

The expression *to that end* means “for that purpose”: *He wanted to discuss his position, and arranged a meeting to that end.*

In legal English, *party* refers to a person or organisation that takes one side in an agreement (parte). In other contexts, a *party* can be a social event (festa), a group (comitiva) or a political organization (partito).

Public Office is an official position of authority (incarico pubblico). Also *to hold office* (essere in carica) and *to stand/run for office* (essere candidato alle elezioni): *Barack Obama is the first African American to hold the office of President of the United States.*

The word *jail* (prigione, carcere) is also spelled as *gaol* in British English, with the same pronunciation. A *jail sentence* is a punishment of time in jail (condanna alla reclusione). The verb *to sentence* means to declare the punishment: *The judge sentenced the convicted to 10 years in prison.*

The word *custody* has two principal meanings. *To be in custody* mean to be in jail (in detenzione). *Custody* of a minor is instead protective care (affidamento).

COMPREHENSION

Say whether the following statements are True or False.

1. The article concerns the condition of women in the EU.
2. The report says that women in the UK are discriminated against in many sectors of society.
3. According to the report, not all women who are victims of violence get the help they need.
4. Amnesty International UK wants the Government to introduce new laws to fight discrimination against women.
5. The report says that too many women who commit minor offences are going to prison.

VOCABULARY

Exercise 4 Match the words from the text in column A to their synonyms in column B.

A

1. deal

B

a. wages

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 2. standing | b. weaknesses |
| 3. earnings | c. treatment |
| 4. tackle | d. deal with |
| 5. failings | e. position |

Exercise 5 Terms related to the law. Choose the correct alternative.

1. At the **process / trial** the jury took two days to reach a verdict.
2. There was sufficient **testaments / evidence** to prosecute the thief.
3. He was found **guilty / wrong** by the jury.
4. Civil courts do not deal with criminal **disputes / arguments**.
5. The judge **charged / sentenced** him to 10 years' imprisonment.

Exercise 6 To bring. Complete the sentences with the correct word.

about	back	up	out	together
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1. The death of their child brought them closer _____.
2. The government wants to bring _____ the death penalty.
3. It is not easy to bring children _____.
4. His time in gaol brought _____ the worst in him.
5. The campaign brought _____ a change in the law.

WRITING

Gender equality and political correctness

In jobs, the specific use of the suffix *-ess* is often no longer used:

actress = *actor* *authoress* = *author* *poetess* = *poet*

References to traditional female jobs have been made neutral to include men:
matron = *senior nursing officer* *headmistress* (*headmaster*) = *head teacher*
cleaning lady = *domestic help*

As have references to traditional male jobs to include women:

workman = *worker, labourer, employee* *spokesman* = *spokesperson*
chairman = *chair, chairperson* *policeman* = *police officer*

The word *man* has traditionally been used to describe humanity in general. Today the following alternatives are more acceptable:

man, mankind = *humanity, human beings, the human race, men and women*
manpower = *workforce, staff, human resources*
man-made = *artificial, manufactured*
the man in the street = *a typical person, the average person*

The pronouns *his* or *her* are used to avoid the masculine implication of the generic use of *his*: *Every individual realizes his or her own potential.* Other alternatives are *he/she – s/he – one – they*.

Exercise 7 Rewrite these sentences making them “politically correct”, changing the words in italics.

1. The first *men* lived in caves.
2. The *firemen* put out the fire while the *policemen* held back the crowd.
3. The *head mistress* of every school is responsible for *her* students.
4. *He* who laughs last laughs longest.
5. *Each individual* must have the opportunity to go as far as *his* ability will take *him*.

DISCUSSION

Is sexual discrimination rife in Italy? Discuss the issue with a partner. Consider some of the following areas of life, and how the current situation could be improved:

- education
- the work place
- family matters
- politics