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DRAFT REPORT

on gender equality and empowering women in the digital age
(2015/2007(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

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The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2 and 3(3), second subparagraph, of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the 4th World Conference on Women in 1995, and in particular the area on ‘Women and the Media’,
- having regard to the outcome document of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly in 2000, in which Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are recognised as achievements providing new opportunities for women’s empowerment, but also potential risks,
- having regard to the Declaration of Principles and the Geneva Plan of Action adopted during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) that took place in Geneva in 2003,
- having regard to the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, which details financial and international mechanisms for implementing the WSIS agendas that were adopted during the second phase of the WSIS in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005,
- having regard to the references to women’s rights and gender equality in the Statement on the Implementation of WSIS Outcomes and the related WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015,
- having regard to the results of the WSIS Forum held from 25 to 29 May 2015 in Geneva on ‘Innovating Together: Enabling ICTs for Sustainable Development’, in which a delegation from the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality took part,
- having regard to the Commission Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 (SEC(2010)1079/2), which includes a series of actions related to women and the internet, notably as regards ICT, and the mid-term review of the Strategy,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2015 on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 September on empowering girls through education in

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0218.

the EU¹,

- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2010 entitled ‘EU 2020: a European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) conclusions of May 2014 on ‘Women and the economy: Economic independence from the perspective of part-time work and self-employment’ stating that ‘The Europe 2020 Strategy identifies a number of priority growth areas, including in the white economy and the science and technology sectors. In order to fully tap Europe’s growth potential in these areas, it is important to overcome gender stereotypes and combat educational and occupational segregation’,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 October 2015 on the application of Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation²,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 May 2012 with recommendations to the Commission on application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value³,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2013 on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 September 2013 on the Digital Agenda for Growth, Mobility and Employment⁵, and in particular the Grand Coalition on Digital Skills and Jobs,
- having regard to Action 60 of the Digital Agenda, on encouraging women to take up ICT-related careers and increasing the proportion of women in the ICT sector,
- having regard to the Commission communication ‘A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe’ (COM(2015)0192),
- having regard to Pillar II of the Commission’s Digital Single Market Strategy, which is aimed at creating the right conditions and a level playing field and environment for digital networks and innovative services to develop, and Pillar III, which supports an inclusive digital society in which citizens have the right skills to seize the opportunities brought about by the internet and boost their chances of getting a job,
- having regard to the study by European Parliament Policy Department C entitled ‘Study on Empowering women on the Internet’, published in 2014,
- having regard to Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0312.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0351.

³ OJ C 264 E, 13.9.2013, p. 75.

⁴ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0074.

⁵ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0377.

Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 on the promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination¹,

- having regard to the report of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) entitled ‘Violence against women – an EU-wide survey. Main results’, published in March 2014,
 - having regard to Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims², replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA,
 - having regard to the Commission’s EU Strategy towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings 2012-2016 and the mid-term report on the implementation thereof,
 - having regard to the EU Serious and Organised Crime Policy Cycle, which commenced in 2014, and to the priority area of trafficking in human beings,
 - having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A8-0000/2015),
- A. whereas digitalisation has revolutionised the way people access and provide information, communicate, socialise and work, creating new opportunities to participate in public and political discussions, opening up new prospects for a self-determined life and having enormous economic potential for the European Union and beyond;
- B. whereas these developments have strong potential for the empowerment of women, allowing access to information and knowledge beyond conventional means, thereby opening up new opportunities to interact and campaign with a view to defending the rights and freedom of women and LGBTI persons;
- C. whereas digitalisation has an enormous impact on the labour market by changing value chains and creating new job opportunities and more flexible working patterns; whereas women, in particular, face possible negative consequences such as the erosion of workers’ rights and working time boundaries as well as boundaries of professional and non-professional responsibilities, increasing low-paid and less secure types of employment and contributing to the challenge of maintaining a work-life balance;
- D. whereas, in the digitalised labour market, responsibility is increasingly shifted away from the company to the individual, changing the terms of social security membership of the self-employed and freelancers; whereas digitalisation often uncouples the place of work from the enterprise, challenging the principle of equal pay for equal work at the same workplace, which is of utmost importance for a truly equal society;
- E. whereas the entry of more women into the ICT sector would boost a market in which labour shortages are foreseen and in which an equal participation of women would lead to a gain of around EUR 9 billion for EU GDP each year; whereas the existing male-

¹ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p 320.

² OJ L 101, 15.4.2011, p 1.

dominated workforce leads to many women leaving the ICT sector within a few years of completing their university degree;

- F. whereas sexism and gender stereotyping is a burden for economic development and the competitiveness of the EU, further widening the already strong digital gender gap in the field of ICT, media and information society;
- G. whereas education and training are key to empowering women in the digital age, and thus to a society with future viability; whereas 60 % of school students in the EU never use digital equipment in their classroom; whereas the already low share of ICT female graduates has dropped; whereas, in initiatives such as the Code Week, ICT for Better Education, the Leaders Club and the Grand Coalition for Digital Jobs, which aim at further fostering e-education and e-skills, women remain largely underrepresented;
- H. whereas ICT, like any technology, can be used and abused to threaten women, their rights and freedoms, and ultimately their empowerment, such as in the case of cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking, trafficking of human beings through the internet, hate speech, incitement to hatred, discrimination and violation of fundamental rights; whereas such new challenges and risks need to be identified and addressed appropriately by policymakers as well as by enterprises, companies and civil society organisations, while providing room for information exchange on the internet;

General recommendations

1. Urges the Commission and the Council to fully exploit the potential that the information society, ICT and the internet have to promote women's empowerment, women's rights and freedoms as well as gender equality;
2. Calls on the Commission to exploit and better target the Digital Agenda and the Digital Single Market Strategy with a view to addressing the severe gender gap within the ICT sector, fostering education and training of women and girls in ICT, increasing the visibility of women in the digital arena, enhancing gender equality and participation of women through better access to funding and supporting civil society and women's organisations in making an inclusive internet a reality;
3. Urges the Commission to include in the upcoming Strategy for Equality 2016-2020 specific actions to support the integration and participation of women in the information society and to strongly promote women's networks online as they are the manifestation of a self-organised, bottom-up approach to female empowerment and should receive all the support necessary for them to become long-term;
4. Notes the Commission communication on 'A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe', but regrets its narrow focus, as it underestimates the considerable potential that digitalisation can have with regard to an inclusive, equal and participatory society and fails to give sufficient recognition to the opportunities that targeted support and funding infrastructure can provide for women's empowerment;
5. Calls on the EU and the Member States to develop, support and implement the actions promoted by the UN and its bodies, notably in the framework of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS),

in order to strive for women's empowerment in the digital age at European and global level;

Participation

6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make better use of the considerable potential that digitalisation has at all levels of political participation and the inclusion of women in decision-making processes; highlights the major opportunities that digitalisation holds with respect to access to information, transparency and greater government accountability;
7. Calls on the Commission to make full use of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme to specifically target civil society and women's organisations working in relation to digitalisation and ICT, in order to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation of women and to pay special attention to the gender-specific objectives in the upcoming evaluations of implementation;

Labour market

8. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and social partners to promote gender equality in ICT companies, representative bodies and training institutions and to closely monitor and follow up the progress made;
9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to address the severe underrepresentation of women in the ICT sector, in particular those in higher positions and on boards; urges the Commission and the Member States to unblock the Directive on Equal Representation of Women on Executive Boards; urgently reminds the Commission of its responsibility to take any action that could help break the deadlock in the Council as regards EU legislation addressing transparency and greater balance in recruitment for decision-making positions;
10. Urges the Commission and the Member States to safeguard fundamental workers' rights and the social protection of employees and to combat precarious working conditions; urges the Commission to propose, and the Member States to further develop, new protection mechanisms adapted to the working and career patterns shaped by digitalisation, paying particular attention to the situation of women;
11. Notes that the digitalisation of the labour market requires adaptation of both labour market policies and the underlying social security systems; calls on the Commission and the Member States, with regard to the Commission's roadmap 'New start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families', to address the impact of digitalisation on workers with care responsibilities, as regards working conditions and the need for adaptation of the workplace, skills development and lifelong learning opportunities;
12. Notes that the gender pay gap remains one of the major issues in relation to the gender gap in the ICT sector, and calls, therefore, on the Member States to finally start actively implementing the Commission Recommendation on strengthening the principle of equal pay between men and women through transparency and continued positive action, preferably by means of legislation, and to introduce wage transparency measures and

gender-neutral job evaluations; calls on the Commission to address equal pay in its 2016 work programme initiative ‘New Start for working parents’, as the pay gap increases even further when people become parents;

Education and training

13. Underlines the importance of ensuring gender mainstreaming in the education sector by promoting digital literacy and the participation of women and girls in ICT education and training through the integration of coding, new media and technologies in education curricula at all levels and in all types of education and training, including for teaching staff, in order to reduce and remove digital skills gaps; highlights, in this connection, the importance of open educational resources (OERs), which ensure better access to education for all;
14. Calls on the Commission to promote digital technologies as tools for reducing barriers to entry in the labour market in the framework of lifelong learning and to set EU benchmarks for public and private investment in skills as a percentage of GDP;
15. Urges the Commission, within the scope of the Digital Single Market Strategy, and more specifically with regard to the reference to building an inclusive e-society, to increase the visibility of women in technology by starting an endowed professorship for women in ICT, setting up a pilot project on a European online university specifically focused on ICT and technical engineering and introducing a tailored scholarship programme for women in the area of ICT and new media;

Investment and funding entrepreneurship

16. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to make funds available and to improve access to funds for female entrepreneurs to create ICT-related businesses and digital start-ups, fostering innovation and investment within the EU;
17. Holds that, especially with regard to the objective of the Digital Single Market Strategy of creating the right conditions for an innovative and competitive ICT environment and improvements for finance opportunities for SMEs and start-ups, women’s access to funding needs special consideration;
18. Calls on the Commission in relation to the Digital Agenda to thoroughly monitor and evaluate the application of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting within the framework of EU funds in accordance with Article 7 of the Common Provisions Regulation on European funds, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the involvement of women’s organisations in the monitoring committees of funding programmes in order to guarantee that targeted actions strengthening the role of women in ICT are implemented; recalls the Commission’s commitment to gender budgeting;
19. Calls on the Commission to take into account the gender dimension when analysing and reporting on the partnership involvement also in relation to the Digital Agenda;
20. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the European Investment Bank, to set up support programmes in relation to investing in ICT through the European Structural and

Investment Funds, including favourable credit conditions and loans for firms, civil society organisations and start-ups in the ICT sector in which 40 % of the workforce are female;

21. Calls on the Commission to support and promote a digital entrepreneurial culture for women, promote and financially support a European networking and mentoring platform for women and further strengthen the role of women in existing programmes;

Fight against violence against women in a digitalised world

22. Calls for identification of the challenges posed by the use of ICT and the internet to commit crimes, issue threats or perpetrate violence against women based on misogyny, homophobia or transphobia; urges policymakers to address these issues properly;
23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to consider the changed realities of women and girls, on account of digitalisation, in the implementation of future EU data protection legislation; emphasises that data controllers may only use sensitive data for limited purposes and may under no circumstances further share such data;
24. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make the necessary resources available in order to ensure that rules concerning the safeguarding of sensitive data contained in online communications are observed;
25. Calls on the Commission to launch and support e-literacy and training programmes, as well as awareness campaigns, thereby raising awareness of the potential risks of the digital world and how to counter them; calls on the Commission to promote campaigns against stereotypes in social media and digital media;
26. Calls for the EU institutions, agencies and bodies, as well as the Member States and their law enforcement agencies, to cooperate and concretely coordinate their actions to counter the use of ICT to commit crimes related to trafficking in human beings, cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking; calls for the EU Cybersecurity Strategy and the Europol Cybercrime Centre to cover these issues; calls on the Commission to promote training and capacity-building for victim support in digital matters, for police and judicial authorities, as well as psychological support during court cases related to the issue;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.