



Resolution 2235 (2018)¹

Empowering women in the economy

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In spite of the significant progress achieved in the last few decades, inequality between women and men is still rife in Council of Europe member States and beyond, and is particularly evident in the economy.
2. Gender inequality in the economy manifests itself in various forms, including difficult access for women to the labour market and to career progression, especially at top level (glass ceiling). Unjustified differences in pay levels (gender pay gap) are a blatant form of discrimination based on gender in the labour market.
3. Women are under-represented in management jobs, and over-represented in non-standard, part-time and precarious work, which generally holds fewer opportunities for professional development and career advancement. Gender differences also exist among autonomous workers and entrepreneurs, with over 50% more self-employed men than women, and the gap widening as the size of the business grows.
4. Gender segmentation of the economy also contributes to disparities, as sectors with a predominant female work force, such as education, social work and care, tend to feature lower remuneration levels. Women are under-represented in particular in the area of STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), which offer better employment and professional development opportunities.
5. The Parliamentary Assembly has consistently advocated gender equality in the economy through different measures, including positive action such as reserved quotas on corporate boards, and work-life balance reconciliation measures, and with texts such as [Resolution 1719 \(2010\)](#) and [Recommendation 1911 \(2010\)](#) on women and the economic and financial crisis, [Resolution 1825 \(2011\)](#) and [Recommendation 1777 \(2011\)](#) More women in economic and social decision-making bodies, [Resolution 1921 \(2013\)](#) on gender equality, reconciliation of work and private life and co-responsibility, and [Resolution 1939 \(2013\)](#) on parental leave as a way to foster gender equality.
6. The situation has improved in some Council of Europe member States thanks to a variety of measures ranging from positive discrimination to reconciliation measures including flexible work arrangements and parental leave schemes. Awareness raising, training and life-long education have also contributed to this positive development. However, improvement is slow and is not achieved to the same extent in all countries.
7. The experience of more gender-equal societies shows that equality between women and men in the economy is a precondition for advances in other spheres, including public and political life. Accordingly, the Assembly recognises that maternity and motherhood must be supported and protected within the workplace and must not be treated as though they were impediments for a woman's career. Equal treatment of men and women within the economy is essential to society.
8. The Assembly is concerned that inequalities in the workplace have a severe impact on the economic well-being of women, not only in the short term but also in the longer term, as the combination of lower pay, precarious employment and limited career advancement translate over time into considerably lower pensions and wealth. It notes that the various manifestations of discrimination based on gender in the economy are interconnected and linked with gender inequalities within the household. This correlation should always be borne in mind both when analysing various forms of inequality and when designing possible countermeasures.

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 June 2018 (27th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14573](#), report of Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Elena Centemero). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 June 2018 (27th Sitting).



9. The Assembly believes that education plays a crucial role in combating the cultural factors that hinder women's participation in the economy, particularly gender stereotypes, which limit women's freedom to choose to pursue their education and careers. For this reason a disproportionate burden of unpaid household and care work is taken on by women. Training and life-long education, in addition, would contribute to countering gender segregation in the labour market. The study of STEM subjects, in particular, should be strongly encouraged among women and girls, in view of the growing importance of these subjects and the current gender imbalance in this area.

10. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States and States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly, to:

10.1. as regards women employees:

10.1.1. encourage public and private companies to adopt policies aimed at enhancing gender balance and equal opportunities in the work place, through human resources management policies in areas including recruitment, training and career progression;

10.1.2. require public and private companies to introduce transparency policies on salaries, making remuneration scales public by sector and type of job, with a view to guaranteeing equal treatment for equal work;

10.1.3. consider introducing a certification system acknowledging that a company's remuneration schemes are not discriminatory, in particular on grounds of gender;

10.1.4. recognise that maternity and parenthood are essential and positive contributions to society that should not be treated negatively or in any way as an impediment to career progression by introducing legislation and policies on work-life balance measures, including flexible work arrangements (part-time work, teleworking, flexible hours) and attractive parental leave schemes;

10.1.5. provide affordable childcare services for children of all age groups and encourage companies to do likewise;

10.1.6. introduce incentives to childcare, such as tax deductions or vouchers for expenditure related to childcare;

10.1.7. promote, particularly through financial and fiscal incentives, companies' policies to encourage women to return to work after maternity leave, including professional training and guidance;

10.2. as regards women in management positions, introduce quotas reserved for the under-represented sex on company boards of directors of 30% or more with financial and non-financial sanctions for non-compliance, such as the dismissal of the entire board in severe cases;

10.3. as regards women's entrepreneurship:

10.3.1. promote women's access to funding for the creation of businesses and land ownership, in particular through special credit lines at reduced interest rates;

10.3.2. provide women with free or affordable training opportunities and guidance for the creation of businesses, specifically designed for women;

10.3.3. encourage mentoring and coaching programmes for women entrepreneurs and enhance gender equality in the work of business incubators;

10.4. as regards women who are mothers, consider recognising unremunerated household and caregiving work in the pension system, so as to guarantee adequate financial coverage to women and men who take on caring responsibilities;

10.5. as regards education:

10.5.1. introduce citizenship education in school curricula with a focus on gender equality, based on a holistic approach encompassing equality between women and men in private and public life, including in education and participation in the work force;

10.5.2. provide training on gender issues and equality to teaching and non-teaching school staff, with a view to combating gender stereotypes in education, including as regards educational and career guidance;

- 10.5.3. encourage girls to choose STEM disciplines through educational guidance activities throughout their schooling and at university;
 - 10.5.4. encourage education institutions at school and university levels to explore new approaches to recruiting students in STEM disciplines, with a view to improving gender balance in the student population;
 - 10.5.5. promote the equal access of women and men to information and communication technology and to lifelong education in this area;
 - 10.5.6. introduce into schools' economy and finance programmes the knowledge of legislative and financial instruments that make it possible for women to be better integrated into economic life and which would ensure gender equality;
- 10.6. as regards information and awareness raising, promote information and awareness-raising campaigns to counter gender stereotypes, particularly regarding the world of work, including through relevant role models and testimonials;
- 10.7. as regards data collection, promote data collection and analysis on the impact of innovative gender-equality-oriented management practices.