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News | 24.05.2012

Equal pay for equal work!

Gender pay gap still exists in all member states

Equal pay for equal work has been one of the most basic principals of the European Community since its foundation in 1957. However, despite legislation, women continue to earn less than men. On average women needed to work until 2nd March in order to earn as much as men had earned the year before, with women in Germany having to work until 25th March. This gender pay gap has remained high across the 27 EU countries despite a directive on equal pay being implemented 30 years ago, which is why we are urging a review, and the introduction of effective sanctions.

Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome specifically stated that there should be no differentiation of pay between women and men in order to avoid unfair competition between them and between countries. A directive in 1975 attempted to address the principle of equal pay, but without much success. More recent attempts to improve legislation have also failed to close the gender pay gap with it averaging 16.4 % in the EU in 2010. This is much higher in some member states at 27,6% in Estonia, 25,5 in Austria, 23,1 % in Germany and 22% Greece.

There are multiple reasons for this gap. Some inequalities in the labour market in practice mainly affect women. Women in feminised industries and occupations earn less on average, while also having less collective representation and bargaining power. These are some of the issues that have not yet been fully addressed. That is why the Greens/EFA group is calling upon Commissioner Viviane Reding to review the current legislation.

On International Women's Day last year, Green MEPs Franziska Brantner and Karima Delli and eight other MEPs across the political groups used the new powers granted to them by the Lisbon Treaty to present a letter and a proposal for a resolution on equal pay for equal work.

The Commission had ignored a resolution on equal pay adopted by the European Parliament in 2008. Although Commissioner Reding had announced at the beginning of her term in office that she would seriously tackle the gender pay gap at the European level, nothing happened apart from the European Equal Pay Day. On International Women's Day on the 8th March this year, Commissioner Reding offered no promises of concrete political action for Europe, instead declaring an intention only to publish a report in 2013 with the results of the monitoring of member states' performance in this area.

A report on top of all of the studies already on the table is unacceptable. The Greens/EFA group and the

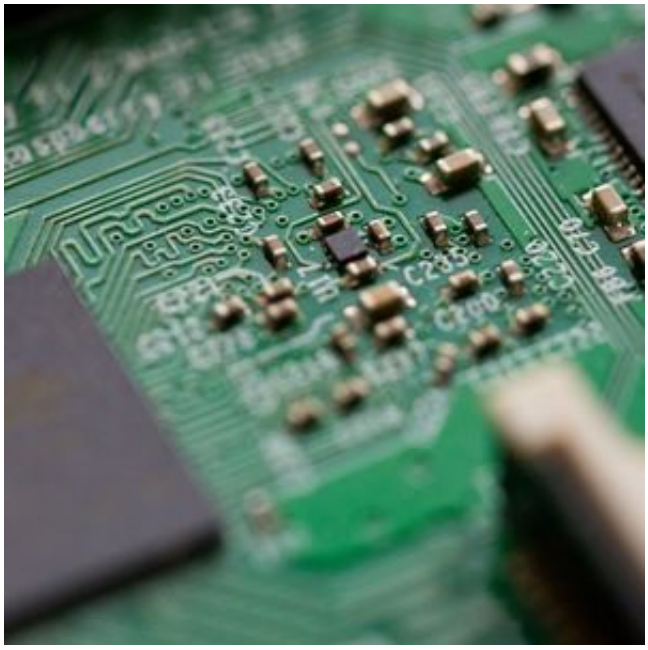
European Parliament are now urging the Commission to better enforce the existing legislation by imposing more effective sanctions. These should have real effects and include penalties, administrative fines and disqualification from public benefits and subsidies.

The detailed recommendations adopted today include work evaluation and job classification, social dialogue, prevention of discrimination, gender mainstreaming and sanctions and streamlining of EU regulation and policy and will provide the Commission with the necessary framework for reviewing current legislation on equal pay. We have also called for the possibility of collective redress to enable NGOs and trade unions to represent consenting victims of discrimination. The gender pay gap has been allowed to fester for far too long and it is high time that effective measures were introduced to finally close it.

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Karima Delli

Member

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