Press release | 17.06.2010

Gender Equality and the Crisis

European Parliament speaks for the first time on women and the crisis

The European Parliament today adopted a report on the gender aspects of the financial and economic crisis. Raül Romeva, vice-president of the Greens/EFA group and author of the ***report, commented after the vote:***

" This is an important day for many millions of women in Europe because for the first time since the crisis began, we are talking about its unequal impact on them. I am please that once more it is the European Parliament that is leading the way for other institutions, in this case with a report that finally places gender issues on the table in the discussions about, and solutions to, the economic crisis.

The report shows that gender inequalities are both a cause and consequence of the financial and economic crisis. A clear imbalance can be seen in the gender make up of the decision making bodies of financial institutions. At the European level, three financial institutions (ECB, EIB and EIF) are led by men with only 10% of their decision makers being women. This has led to a culture of risk taking with catastrophic consequences."

Mr. Romeva added:

"The inclusion of women in these decision making areas is a way to invest in new priorities and practices with a high chance of achieving positive outcomes not only for women but for society as a whole. With this in mind, I welcome the commitment by Commissioner Reding to present a legal instrument to ensure the presence of women in decision making in autumn of this year."

Besides the origin of the crisis, the report has shown how the gender dimension is also becoming clearer in its consequences. The crisis has had particularly harmful effects on women, with pressure increasing due to the segregation of the labour market. While the first wave of the crisis has affected mainly the financial sector and other male dominated sectors such as construction and car manufacturing, receiving much greater media attention, the second wave of the crisis has had an identical, if not worse, impact upon sectors such as retail, utilities and tourism, where women are the highest proportion of workers.

"Equality between men and women is a key principle in any policy response to the crisis that will begin the transition to the post-crisis era. We must prevent the recession being used, as is already happening in some Member States, as an argument for reducing gender equality measures. We therefore hope that this report will mark a clear path forward for the EU and national governments when considering proposals, as the recovery packages thus far have failed to acknowledge the gender aspects of the crisis" Mr. Romeva added.

Another important aspect in the report, which is supported by a majority of deputies, is the request to the

European Commission to prepare a specific section in the EU2020 Strategy. He also asked the Commission to increase public resources for the promotion of professional fields in which women work, such as health, tourism and culture.

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