**Follow-up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution of 17 April 2018 on empowering women and girls through the digital sector**

**2017/3016 (RSP)**

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**2. EP reference number:** B8-0183/2018 / P8\_TA-PROV(2018)0102

**3. Date of adoption of the resolution:** 17 April 2018

**4. Subject:** Empowering women and girls through the digital sector

**5. Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)

**6. Brief analysis / assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The resolution calls on the European Commission and the Member States to address the gender gap in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector and to ensure that women and men – equally – can take advantage of the opportunities that comes with the digitisation of the European economy and society.

The resolution stresses the need to tackle the lack of girls studying Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and the lack of women working in the ICT sector. It stresses that the Commission and Member States should make funds available/improve access to funds to promote and support women entrepreneurs.

The resolution calls on the Commission for a number of actions:

* calls on the Commission to exploit and better target the Digital Agenda and the Digital Single Market Strategy with a view to addressing the serious gender gap within the ICT sector and fostering the full integration of women into the sector, particularly in relation to technical and telecommunication professions, and to foster the education and training of women and girls in ICT and other science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects;
* calls on the Commission to implement the actions aimed at reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps, thus fighting poverty among women, and to put a premium on promoting female employment in the ICT sector, fighting gender stereotypes and fostering gender equality at all levels and in all types of education, including in relation to gendered study subject choices and careers, in line with the priorities set out in the Education and Training 2020 framework;
* calls for the EU and the Member States to develop, support and implement the actions promoted by the UN and its bodies, in particular in the framework of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), including in the context of school curricula, in order to strive for women’s empowerment in the digital age at European and global level;
* calls on the Commission and the Member States to address the gender gap in the ICT sector by stressing the business case for diversity and by creating additional and stronger incentives for both companies and women such as providing role models, mentoring programmes and career paths, in order to increase the visibility of women; encourages Member States to support and take action on, among other things, the development of online content that promotes gender equality, the promotion of access to and the use of ICT as tools to combat gender discrimination in areas such as gender violence, and the attainment of work-life balance;
* calls on the Commission to implement the initiatives included in Action II of the Plan aimed at attracting more women into STEM professions, which, according to the EIGE, could lead to a closure of the gender wage gap by 2050 due to the higher productivity of STEM jobs;
* calls on the Commission and the Member States to make funds available and to improve access to existing funds in order to promote and support women entrepreneurs, particularly in the framework of the digital transformation of industry, to ensure that any company, irrespective of its size, the sector it operates in or its location in Europe, can benefit from digital innovations; stresses, in this context, that digital innovation hubs, which are key to facilitating the digital transformation, should put a specific focus on women entrepreneurs and start-ups owned by women;
* calls on the Commission to fully and comprehensively address the gender gap within the process of digitalisation;
* calls on the Commission and the Member States to support lifelong learning as well as training and schemes which help participants to adapt better or to prepare for a potential change of career path in accordance with the growing demand for e-skills in many different sectors, paying particular attention to women aged 55 and over, in particular those with caregiver responsibilities, and women who have taken a break from their career or are re-entering the workplace, in order to ensure that they are not left behind in the increasingly rapid shift towards digitalisation, and in order to safeguard them from exclusion from the labour market;
* calls on the Commission and the Member States to engage constructively with and support digital civil society organisations;
* calls on the Commission and the Member States to identify the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation, also with regard to working conditions, such as unstable forms of employment and work-related mental health problems;
* calls on the Commission and the Member States, as well as businesses, to promote gender equality in ICT by collecting gender-disaggregated data on the use of ICT, developing targets, indicators and benchmarks to track the progress of women’s access to ICT, and to promote examples of best practice among ICT companies;
* calls on the EIGE to compile data on how digital services can be better employed for the benefit of women and gender equality;
* calls on the Commission and the Member States to guarantee the protection of girls from advertising in the digital environment that could incite them to behaviour harmful to their health;
* calls for the EU institutions and the Member States to run campaigns in order to raise women’s awareness of the benefits of ICT, as well as the risks involved, and to provide them with the necessary education and knowledge on how to protect themselves online;
* And calls for the EU institutions, agencies and bodies, as well as the Member States and their law enforcement agencies, to cooperate and take concrete steps to coordinate their actions to counter the use of ICT to commit crimes related to trafficking in human beings, cyber-harassment and cyber-stalking, given that they are often cross-border in nature and that EU-level coordination is vital in order to prosecute these crimes; invites the Member States to review their criminal law to ensure that new forms of digital violence are defined and acknowledged.

**7. Response to requests and overview of action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

**Paragraphs 1 and 5:**

Promoting gender equality in all aspects of social, political and economic life is a priority of the Commission. Mobilising women and encouraging them to work in the digital field and to specialise in ICT is an untapped resource. More women in the digital jobs market could create an annual €16 billion GDP boost in the EU.

Digital skills are also a matter of empowerment. Digital skills mean the freedom to navigate safely on the internet, the knowledge to search and check information, to create content of your own, to do your banking online, to shop, to be in touch with your friends and family and to run your own business. The European Commission believes that digital skills are as important as knowing how to read, write and do mathematics. They are basic skills that everyone should have.

The underrepresentation of women in digital is complex and cross-cutting. This is why Commissioner Gabriel on 8 March 2018 started a reflection process on how to take a more strategic approach   on "Women in Digital". It lays out three ways to entice girls and women to take up science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) studies and go into ICT-related careers.

Firstly, it aims at challenging the gender stereotypes and bias towards women that persist in society and in the digital economy. The second area focuses on skills and education and the third area of the strategy focuses on promoting digital entrepreneurship for women and lowering the access barriers.

**Paragraph 17:**

To tackle gender stereotypes Commissioner Gabriel has for example launched the "No woman - no panel" approach and will host the "Digital4Her" conference on 19 June 2018. Furthermore, EU audio-visual rules (Audio-visual Media Services Directive) ban sex-based discrimination from commercial communications. The 2006 Recommendation on the protection of minors and human dignity and on the right of reply in relation to the competitiveness of the European audio-visual and on-line information services industry invites the audio-visual and on-line information services industry and other parties concerned: to consider effective means of combating discrimination based on sex in audio-visual and on-line information services and promoting a diversified and realistic picture of the skills and potential of men and women in society.

The Commission is also committed through the Creative Europe MEDIA sub-programme to put more energy and force into raising awareness of gender equality by measuring women's participation through data gathering, monitoring and counting. The Commission recently started measuring gender balance within the Development, TV programming and Training schemes. Within MEDIA the support of mentoring activities for female audiovisual professionals in collaboration with professional networks and platforms will be starting in 2019.

**Paragraphs 1, 5, 11 and 15:**

When it comes to digital competences the Commission has for example launched the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, which mobilises companies, non-for proﬁt organisations, educational providers, social partners and Member States who work together to tackle the lack of digital skills in Europe. In 2017 the Coalition carried out a special call for concrete commitments by its members to offer trainings and other activities to equip more women and girls with digital skills and entice them to pursue ICT studies and careers. The Coalition also promotes the uptake of the digital skills for women and girls through for example campaigns by its members. In mid-2018 there are 20 National Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition whose members work on tackling the digital skills gap – including for women – in their countries. Furthermore, in 2017 the Commission also awarded a special European Digital Skills Awards to projects that encourage girls and women to take up digital skills and careers.

With the help of the Digital Champions, the Commission is also developing model projects, including those who target digital skills for females, that can be scaled up and replicated in different countries and that potentially could be eligible for funding from the European Social Funds in 2018.

Furthermore, the Commission gives out the EU Prize for Women Innovators which is the largest prize of its kind worldwide, celebrates and rewards women entrepreneurs who have developed and brought to market an outstanding innovation, many of which in sectors stereotypically considered male.

The Commission supports EU Code Week which had 1.2 million participants last year of which an impressive 46% were girls or women. The aim of this grass-roots initiative is to introduce computational thinking in a fun and engaging way. To show people how you can build and create with code today – just as you can build other things with bricks, steel and wood. The Commission will now take action to encourage more schools to participate by 2020. The idea is to use Code Week as an icebreaker and ignite interest among teachers – who are predominantly women – and students in tech, which means an equal involvement of girls and boys.

**Paragraph 18:**

In addition to recognising the importance of raising awareness on digital opportunities the Commission also carry out actions on challenges brought by the fast-evolving digital landscape. The Commission co-funds Safer Internet Centres in 27 EU MS plus Iceland and Norway, with the core platform www.betterinternetforkids.eu as a single entry point to online tools and services for EU citizens and the Safer Internet community. The main task of the Safer Internet Centres is to raise awareness and foster digital literacy among young people, parents and teachers about risks users may encounter online and ways to protect and empower them. Some Centres' initiatives include a gendered approach to recognise and address the differences between girls and boys while engaging with technologies (e.g. cyberbullying, sexting, involvement in coding and STEM activities). The network also runs Youth panels to promote youth participation and co-creation for online safety guidance, learning, campaigning and decision making. The majority of Youth panellists are girls, amplifying their interest in digital matters at an early age, which could lead to a larger uptake of ICT or STEM careers in later life.

On Safer Internet Day 2018, the Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya Gabriel launched the EU-wide #SaferInternet4EU Campaign, as announced in the Digital Education Action Plan. The campaign federates efforts from different stakeholders at EU and national level to improve awareness on digital challenges and opportunities. Throughout 2018, a range of #SaferInternet4EU initiatives across Europe aim to reach young people, parents, teachers, and other EU citizens to become empowered and responsible digital users. #SaferInternet4EU covers a wide range of topics, such as critical thinking, media literacy and digital skills. These aim to equip users to identify and combat existing and emerging challenges such as online disinformation, cyber threats, and other risks brought about by emerging technologies and connected devices. The Campaign will also include initiatives and tips on cyber hygiene.

**Paragraph 7:**

The Commission agrees on the importance of tackling the digital gender gap in the world of entrepreneurs. To promote digital entrepreneurship for women the Commission has for example set up the WeHubs, which is a one-stop shop for women who want to start, run and grow a business. The Commission also gives out the annual EU Prize for Women Innovators to women who have received EU research and innovation funding at some point in their careers, and recently founded or co-founded a successful company based on their innovative ideas. The Commission also supports the European Community of Women Business Angels and women entrepreneurs. The goal of this initiative – funded by the European Parliament – is to support women entrepreneurs in accessing alternative sources of funding. It will do so by raising the awareness of business angels, training women who would like to become business angels and helping women entrepreneurs to present their business ideas to potential investors. The network was created in 2017, by means of 4 projects covering 14 EU countries.

**Paragraph 16:**

The Commission recognises the importance of having a robust and systematic measurement of the inclusion of women in ICT and STEM and to be able to follow the development in the sector. To this end the Commission will develop a Scoreboard for Women in Digital that will be part of the annual Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) report as of 2019. The scoreboard will include indicators such as basic and advanced digital skills, STEM graduates and ICT specialists. It will analyse progress in Member States and in the EU.

**Paragraph 2:**

Cooperation between the Commission and the Member States within the context of the Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020 is constructive and forward-looking. The Working Group on Digital Skills and Competences, in particular, offers a, ideal forum to share challenges, exchange best practices and find solutions applicable to different contexts. The group focuses on the development of digital skills and competences at all levels and stages of learning and the potential and challenges of digital technology use in education; special attention is given to early digital education, the role of computational thinking and coding, and digital skills gap.

Moreover, the recently adopted Digital Education Action Plan outlines how the Commission, in the coming three years, will support Member States' work in ensuring that education systems make good use of digital technologies. The plan sets out measures to support teachers and learners in developing the competences they need to live, work and thrive in the digital age. Among the 11 actions proposed, one action specifically addresses the gender gap to boost women participation in science, technology and business. Indeed, Action 8 of the Digital Education Action Plan builds upon a series of inspirational, digital and entrepreneurship education workshops that will be organised throughout Europe for girls in primary and secondary education. Innovative education formats and a close cooperation with partners from business, research and education will be used to provide positive role models and to inspire the next generation of female students to consider careers in technology, entrepreneurship and innovation.

**Paragraphs 2 and 6:**

The Commission recognises that the gender pay gap and women’s lower labour market participation still remain key issues in tackling gender inequality. Women earn around 16% less than men due to occupational and vertical segregation: women enter lower-paid sectors and are underrepresented in leading positions. Women are more likely to work part-time and to interrupt their careers for family reasons.

One of the five priorities of the Strategic Engagement is to reduce gender pay, earnings and pension gaps, and thus fight poverty among women. The Commission is working on the implementation of the Communication: EU Action Plan 2017-2019, tackling the gender pay gap, which was adopted in November 2017. It includes a broad and coherent set of 20 activities to tackle the gender pay gap in areas such as application of the equal pay principle, segregation in occupations and sectors, combating vertical segregation, tackling the care penalty.

The Commission is also looking at pay transparency one of the key levers in bringing gender pay differentials within companies to light. The evaluation report on the implementation of the Commission's 2014 Pay Transparency Recommendation, which accompanied the Action Plan, revealed that Member States had put in place only limited measures to increase pay transparency. The role of all Member States is very important in implementing measures to tackle existing gender pay gap.

Another crucial instrument to achieve gender equality in the EU is the initiative for better work-life balance of working parents and carers adopted in April 2017. The proposed Directive will allow both men and women to better balance their working lives with family responsibilities. It aims to improve existing rights and introduces new rights. It would introduce paid paternity, parental and carer’s leave for all workers, including non-transferable periods for fathers and mothers with regard to parental leave.

**Paragraph 8:**

The Commission's initiatives on skills, particularly the Skills Agenda for Europe launched in June 2016 is set very much in a Life-Long Learning perspective. In this context, the Commission is aware that individuals will experience many transitions in working life, so upskilling and lifelong learning will be increasingly required from everyone on an ongoing basis. Making the right training, skills and support available to people in the EU is the aim of our 2016 new Skills Agenda for Europe. Because of the digitisation the labour market and the growing demand for digital skills, and because these skills are also crucial for social inclusion and active citizenship, the Skills Agenda addresses the growing need for digital skills high or low throughout the agenda.

Regarding women aged 55 and over, with caregiver responsibilities and parents returning to work following a period taking care of family dependants, these groups would be typically be covered by the renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning and, if low-skilled, the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

The Commission actively promotes adult participation in learning and provides financial support to Member States for the implementation of Council resolution on a Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning. The Agenda's priorities for the period 2015 – 2020 include: significantly increasing supply and take up of high-quality provision, especially in literacy, numeracy and digital skills and effective outreach, guidance and motivation strategies. The European Social Fund also supports investment in the human capital of adults within the EUR 27bn available across Europe for education and training projects (2014-20).

The Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, adopted in December 2016, envisages the provision of individualised assessments of skills to identify learning needs, a quality learning offer and validation of the skills acquired. Under the terms of the Recommendation, Member States should by mid-2018 “outline appropriate measures for the implementation of this Recommendation at national level”, including which groups of low-skilled adults should be given priority. In choosing priority groups, Member States should also take gender into account. The Commission will provide an overview by 31 December 2018 of the implementation measures outlined by Member States.

**Paragraph 12:**

The European Pillar of Social Rights recognises (Principle 5) that "employment relationships that lead to precarious working conditions shall be prevented". In December 2017, the Commission proposed a Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions in the EU to increase the protection of workers, notably those in precarious work, which can be a risk for digitalised work (e.g. platform workers). It aims at better ensuring workers' information on their working conditions and introduces a new set of minimum material rights to increase predictability of employment. It proposes to use a definition of 'worker' based on settled case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union, to cover in all Member States the same, broad categories of workers and provide platform workers with an additional tool to defend their rights.

As regards the prevention and protection of the health and safety at work of workers, also against the background of the changing nature of work and new risks, the Commission Communication “Safer and Healthier Work for All – Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Legislation and Policy” stresses that the EU must continue investing in ensuring effective workers’ protection. In this context, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) is running a series of foresight projects intended to evaluate the possible effects of new technologies, new ways of working and societal change on workers’ safety and health. In particular, the Digitalisation and OSH foresight project looks at the potential impact on OSH of rapid developments in information and communication technologies (ICT), including on-line platforms, artificial intelligence and robotics. It also aims to provide information on changes in ICT, their impact on the nature, location and organisation of work, and the emerging OSH challenges that they may bring.”

In relation to the identification of the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation, the Commission has launched a high-level expert group on the impact of the digital transformation on EU labour markets that will, amongst others, identify the potential social impacts (risks and opportunities) of digitalisation, explore viable ways to manage digitalisation's impact on labour law and working conditions, and identify ways to use digitalisation to make labour markets more inclusive, including with a work-life balance perspective. The Commission is also carrying out, in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a survey to map policy responses to new forms of work in EU and OECD countries, including those measures aimed at improving working conditions.

**Paragraph 17:**

The Commission recognises the importance of combatting violence against women. In this context the Commission works on the EU's accession to the Council of Europe Convention on combating violence against women (the Istanbul Convention) which provides binding rules on a range of aspects and types of violence, including on sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace. The Council Decisions adopted on 11 May 2017 the signing decisions which is the first important step in committing the European Union as a full-fledged Party to the Convention under international law. Following this, the Istanbul Convention was co-signed by the Commission and Council Presidency on 13 June 2017 and will be followed by the conclusion of the Istanbul Convention, which will then be binding upon the institutions of the Union and the Member States. The Commission is now working with the Council Presidency to agree on a code of conduct to set out the respective roles of implementation of EU and Member States. The European Parliament will need to consent to the ratification.

It's important to note that the definition in the Istanbul Convention on sexual harassment corresponds to already existing EU law on non-discrimination. Such behaviour is sanctioned in EU legislation.

When a victim reports crime, we have important legislation in place to protect and support victims and give them an active role in criminal proceedings. The Victims' Rights Directive came into application two years ago and provides a broad range of rights to victims. The next step is to look at how the other Member States have actually implemented and applied these rules and a compliance check is ongoing.

**Paragraph 19**:

The Commission consider trafficking in human beings as violence against women. The EU legal and policy framework takes a human rights based, victim centred, gender specific and child sensitive approach. COM/EU ATC has been taking measure to coordinate and promote actions to counter the use of ICT to commit crimes. It has been addressed, based on the reports of EU Member States, as a separate chapter in the First COM progress report on the trends in the use of the internet and new technologies. The use of ICT to commit crime is also addressed in the coordination work with the EU JHA agencies. Europol in 2017 addressed it in EU SOCTA "Crime in the age of technology", highlighting that traffickers continue to rely on the use of social media at all stages of the trafficking cycle. THB is identified as a priority crime area in the EU Policy Cycle 2018-2021.

Prevention is the corner-stone of the EU action. Many actions of the 2017 Commission Communication on "Reporting on the follow-up to the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in human beings and identifying further concrete actions" foreseeing joint efforts by Commission, EU Member States, non-EU countries, EU agencies, are able to address the link between ICT and trafficking in human beings:

* related to disrupting the business model and untangling the trafficking chain (including to further encourage those EU Member States, to the extent they have not done so, to criminalise those knowingly using services exacted from victims of trafficking);
* to provide better access to and realise the rights for victims (swift and early identification of victims of trafficking to ensure them the needed protection and support measures);
* intensify a coordinated and consolidated response, both within and outside the EU (including via the coordination group of EU agencies; the EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent mechanism and EU Civil Society Platform)
* and support anti-trafficking objectives and priorities, including projects taking particular account of the gender dimension of the phenomenon, high-risk groups as well as high-risk sectors through various EU funding programmes.

**Paragraph 4:**

In an international perspective, the Commission is committed to the work of the UN bodies, including WSIS, the UN Broadband Commission and the UN EQUALS initiative for their work to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5: *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'* target to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.