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The position of women in Science in Europe

Motion for a resolution
presented by Ms Čurdová and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

1. Two years ago, the president of Harvard University, Lawrence H. Summers, sparked an uproar when he said that innate differences between men and women might be one reason fewer women succeed in science and math careers. Summers also questioned how much of a role discrimination plays in the dearth of female professors in science and engineering at elite universities.
2. Few people openly admit that they agree with such unfounded and sexist comments. However, in Europe, too, women have to battle with a serious underestimation of their capabilities due to the prevalent gender stereotypes, which is reflected in measuring scientific excellence. Various research has described practices, such as gatekeeping or the effect of homosociability, that have a negative impact on women's ability to penetrate into higher power echelons in R&D.
3. It is a fact that, despite positive policy developments, women are still under-represented in all research sectors, especially in natural and technical sciences and engineering. The disproportion between women and men is particularly high in the Business Enterprise Sector (BES). Furthermore, the number of women falls the higher the position; this phenomenon has been described in all EU member and accession candidate countries and is referred to as "the leaky pipeline".
4. These facts remain true despite the fact that the number of women graduates with tertiary education is higher than the number of men in all European countries. There are, however, great differences between disciplines, and the number of women in tertiary education in engineering and natural sciences is less high.
5. Furthermore, women's career progression is hindered by the obstacles posed by the disproportion in the responsibilities between men and women in household and childcare responsibilities. Large numbers of women opt out of the sciences after a career break due to the fact that the demands on their time and spatial mobility are great in R&D and that they face bias from employers in R&D on account of their parenting responsibilities.
6. These factors lead to great losses to European research and economies due to the great losses of women's talent, and also the denial of equal rights to women researchers.
7. The Parliamentary Assembly thus calls on the governments of member states of the Council of Europe to take effective measures to counter this loss of talent and open the way for women to play their part in science in equality and dignity.

Signed (see overleaf)

*Signed*¹

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¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group