European Parliament: Resolution on closing the digital gender gap, including in media and audiovisual sectors

IRIS 2021-4:1/15

Ronan Ó Fathaigh
Institute for Information Law (IViR)

On 21 January 2021, the European Parliament adopted an important "Resolution on closing the digital gender gap: women's participation in the digital economy", which includes notable provisions in relation to the European media and audiovisual sectors. This follows the European Commission's Action Plan to support the recovery and transformation of the media and audiovisual sector, which was adopted in December 2020. The Action Plan included a specific action point on launching a communication campaign to "foster diversity not only in front of but also behind the camera", in order to improve diversified representations and add new ideas, stories, and voices (see IRIS 2021-2/3).

The Resolution begins by reiterating under Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), that, in all its activities, the EU shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality between men and women. In this regard, the Resolution notes that to achieve gender equality, girls and young women need equal access to technology and a safe online environment. However, gender stereotypes constitute a serious obstacle to equality between women and men, contributing to gender segregation in education and employment. This has the effect of further widening the gender gap in the digital sector, preventing women's full participation as users, innovators and creators. As such, the Resolution makes a number of recommendations, including in relation to the role of the media and audiovisual sector, and the online environment.

First, in relation to the media and audiovisual sectors, the Resolution emphasises the impact of the cultural, media, advertising and audiovisual sectors in the development and intensification of gender stereotypes and promotion of normative and cultural barriers. This is also replicated through the language and images disseminated. Notably, the Resolution calls on audiovisual and media industries to "increasingly portray women" in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and information and communications technology (ICT)-related professions, and to "introduce depictions of diversity and opportunity within STEM and ICT". Further, the Resolution calls on media industries to include women on discussion panels, in newspaper articles and in other spaces where public opinion and discourse on technological subjects is shaped.

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

Second, in relation to the online environment, the Resolution has notable provisions concerning digital and media literacy, and gender-based online violence. The Resolution notes with “great concern” the rise in digital crimes and acts of intimidation, bullying, doxing, harassment and violence against women in the digital world. It thusstresses the importance of digital and media literacy in combatting gender-based online violence. Importantly, the Parliament calls for further legally binding measures and for a directive to prevent and combat gender-based violence, including cyber violence, which is often directed at women such as public figures, politicians and activists, as well as online hate speech against women.

In particular, the Parliament calls on the Commission to ensure that the forthcoming proposal for a Digital Services Act (see IRIS 2021-2/13) and the new framework for cooperation between internet platforms address online platforms’ responsibilities regarding user-disseminated hate speech and other harmful, abusive and sexist content, to protect women’s safety online. Finally, the Parliament calls on the Commission to develop harmonised legal definitions of cyber violence and a new Code of Conduct for online platforms on combating online gender-based violence.

European Parliament Resolution of 21 January 2021 on closing the digital gender gap: women’s participation in the digital economy, P9_TA-PROV(2021)0026

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0026_EN.html

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026