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PRESS RELEASE

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Gender Pay Gap: Women in Europe still work 59 days 'for free', Commission report finds

16.2%: that's the size of the gender pay gap, or the average difference between women and men's hourly earnings across the EU, according to the latest figures released today by the European Commission. The figure has not moved an inch in the space of a year. According to a report published by the European Commission today, the pay gap between women and men is still a reality in all EU countries, ranging from 27.3% in Estonia to 2.3% in Slovenia. Overall figures confirm a weak downward trend in recent years, with a decrease of 1.1% between 2008 and 2011. Today's report shows the biggest problem in fighting the EU pay gap is the practical application of equal pay rules and the lack of legal action brought by women to national courts.

"With laws guaranteeing equal pay for equal work, equality in the workplace and minimum rights to maternity leave, gender equality is a European achievement. But there is still a way to go to full gender equality. The pay gap is still large and it is not budging. To make things worse: much of the change actually resulted from a decline in men's earnings rather than an increase for women," said Vice-President Viviane Reding, the EU's Justice Commissioner. *"The principle of equal pay for equal work is written in the EU Treaties since 1957. It is high time that it becomes a reality in the workplace as well."*

The report published today assesses the application of the provisions on equal pay in practice in EU countries, and predicts that for the future, the main challenge for all Member States will be the correct application and enforcement of the rules established by the [2006 Equality Directive](#).

The Commission as the Guardian of the Treaties has ensured Member States have correctly transposed EU equal treatment rules, launching infringement cases against 23 Member States regarding the way these Member States transposed a number of EU gender equality laws. All but [one](#) of these cases have been closed.

However, today's report confirms the effective application of the equal pay principle is hindered by the **lack of transparency in pay systems**, the **lack of clear benchmarks on pay equality**, and **by a lack of clear information for workers** that suffer inequality. Increased wage transparency could improve the situation of individual victims of pay discrimination who would be able to compare themselves more easily to workers of the other sex.

Next Steps: In reality only two Member States (France and the Netherlands) have sufficiently and clearly transposed specifically the 2006 Equality Directive in such a way that no further information is required from them. The Commission is following up with the remaining 26 Member States and will work to ensure full application and enforcement of the rights established by EU law, if necessary through further infringement proceedings.

Background

Gender equality is one of the founding principles of the European Union. The principle of equal pay has been enshrined in the Treaties since 1957 and is also incorporated in Directive 2006/54/EC on equal treatment between women and men in employment and occupation.

The European Commission's support for the Member States' duty to tackle the gender pay gap is an important commitment and priority, enshrined in the [European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men \(2010-2015\)](#).

Today's report is accompanied by a comprehensive overview of national and EU case law on equal pay, as well as an overview of the Commission's action to tackle it and examples of national best practices.

Examples of Commission action to tackle the gender pay gap include the [Equality Pays Off Initiative](#); annual [Country Specific Recommendations](#) warning Member States to address the pay gap; European [Equal Pay Days](#); exchange of best practices; and financing of Member State initiatives through the Structural Funds.

Examples of good practices on equal pay at national level:

- The **Belgian** Parliament passed a law in 2012 obliging companies to carry out a comparative analysis of their wage structure every two years. Belgium was also the first EU country to organise an Equal Pay Day (in 2005).
- The **French** 2006 Act on equal Pay requires companies to report on salaries and their plans to close the gender pay gap. Significantly, the Act also requires employers to produce a written annual report on gender equality and submit it to workers' representatives.
- The **Austrian** Equal Treatment Act obliges companies to draw up equal pay reports. The rules are being phased in gradually and are now compulsory for companies with over 250, 500 and 1000 employees. Companies with more than 150 employees will have to produce a report from 2014.

Further examples per Member States can be found in today's report.

For more information

European Commission – Gender pay gap:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/index_en.htm

Homepage of Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU Justice Commissioner:
<http://ec.europa.eu/reding>

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Annex: The gender pay gap figures in EU countries

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Difference 2011- 2008
EU27	:	17.3	17.2	16.2	16.2 (p)	1.1
BE	10.1	10.2	10.1	10.2	10.2	0.0
BG	12.1	12.3	13.3	13.0	13.0	-0.7
CZ	23.6	26.2	25.9	21.6	21.0	5.2
DK	17.7	17.1	16.8	16.0	16.4	0.7
DE	22.8	22.8	22.6	22.3	22.2 (p)	0.6
EE	30.9	27.6	26.6	27.7	27.3	0.3
IE	17.3	12.6	12.6	13.9	:	
EL	21.5	22.0	:	15.0	:	
ES	18.1	16.1	16.7	16.2	16.2 (p)	-0.1
FR	17.3	16.9	15.2	15.6	14.8 (p)	2.2
HR	:	:	:	15.5	17.6 (p)	:
IT	5.1	4.9	5.5	5.3	5.8	-0.9
CY	22.0	19.5	17.8	16.8	16.4 (p)	3.1
LV	13.6	11.8	13.1	15.5	13.6	-1.8
LT	22.6	21.6	15.3	14.6	11.9	9.7
LU	10.2	9.7	9.2	8.7	8.7 (p)	1.0
HU	16.3	17.5	17.1	17.6	18.0	-0.5
MT	7.8	9.2	7.7	7.2	6.0	3.2
NL	19.3	18.9	18.5	17.8	17.9	1.0
AT	25.5	25.1	24.3	24.0	23.7	1.4
PL	14.9	11.4	8.0	4.5	4.5	6.9
PT	8.5	9.2	10.0	12.8	12.5	-3.3
RO	12.5	8.5	7.4	8.8	12.1	-3.6
SI	5.0	4.1	-0.9	0.9	2.3	1.8
SK	23.6	20.9	21.9	19.6	20.5	0.4
FI	20.2	20.5	20.8	20.3	18.2 (p)	2.3
SE	17.8	16.9	15.7	15.4	15.8	1.1
UK	20.8	21.4	20.6	19.5	20.1	1.3

Source: Eurostat, SES

*(p) = provisional data