Promoting gender equality in mental health and clinical research

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The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report by Beatriz BECERRA BASTERRECHEA (ADLE, ES) on promoting gender equality in mental health and clinical research.

Members recalled that the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is a fundamental human right. In this respect, they noted that in the EU, 27 % of the adult population, including both men and women, have experienced at least one episode of mental illness. Accordingly, they called on Member States to **take measures and allocate sufficient resources to ensure access to healthcare** and specifically to mental health services – including women's shelters – independently of their legal status, gender identity, sex characteristics, ethnic origin, or religion.

Gender equality in mental health: Members called on the Commission and the Member States to promote information and prevention campaigns and other initiatives to raise public awareness of mental health problems. They also asked for effective action in order to:

- **change how people with mental health problems are perceived**: Members stressed the fact that there was a link between mental health and poverty and social exclusion. Acknowledging the influence of media and particularly of the Internet and social networks on mental health, Members called for more research on this topic. They pointed out that some women have a distorted perception of their image due to media, stereotyped advertising and social pressure, and develop eating and behavioural disorders, for instance anorexia and bulimia. Members called on the Commission, the Member States, and local authorities to ensure that their mental health strategies address the mental health challenges that could be faced by LGBTI people;
- **develop tailored policies for marginalized and refugee women**: the committee called on Member States to protect women asylum seekers in detention who report abuse, and stresses that these women are to be provided with **immediate protection**. It called on the Commission, the Member States and local authorities to develop specific tailored policies in order to provide mental health services to groups of vulnerable women in marginalised communities.

Gender equality in clinical trials: Members underlined the fact that clinical trials of pharmaceutical products on both men and women are necessary and that these should be inclusive, non-discriminatory and performed under conditions of equality. They wanted **the labels on pharmaceutical products clearly to indicate whether trials on women took place or not,** and whether men and women may expect different side effects. They also asked the Commission to incentivise projects at EU level focused on how women are treated in clinical research.

Members also underlined that **urgent action was required to correct gender gaps in clinical trials in areas of health where such gaps are particularly harmful**, such as in medication for Alzheimer's, cancer, treatment of strokes, anti-depressants, and cardiovascular diseases.

Lastly, the committee called on the Commission and Member States to:

- promote healthcare by ensuring **easy access to services** and the provision of adequate information tailored to men's and women's specific needs and the exchange of best practice in the field of mental health and clinical research;

- **take stock of the specific health needs** of women and men in their health policies;
- ensure that prevention strategies specifically target women who are at risk of intersectional discrimination;
- recognise gender-based violence and violence against women as a public health issue;
- incentivise programmes that address the specific needs of women concerning illnesses such as osteoporosis, musculoskeletal problems and central nervous system illnesses such as Alzheimer's and/or dementia.