Equality between women and men in the European Union in 2014-2015

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The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report by Ernest URTASUN (Greens/EFA, ES) on the equality between women and men in the European Union in 2014-2015.

Members stated that the feminisation of poverty persists in the EU as well as the increased risk of poverty and social exclusion among women. This feminisation of poverty is closely linked to budget cuts to public services, such as healthcare, education, social services and welfare benefits. In this regard, the Commission is called upon to **mainstream gender equality into budgets and policy-making**.

In particular, the Commission is asked for a greater assessment of and measures to address and take steps to **stop the impact of those public spending cuts** which are having negative effects on women's rights and gender equality in the Member States.

New initiatives focusing on women: Members showed support for the Council's call for a new Commission initiative setting out a strategy for gender equality 2016-2020 and for the status of its strategic engagement on gender equality to be enhanced. Further measures are called for to strengthen policies and increase investment supporting female employment in quality jobs across all sectors and to take steps to combat precarious forms of work. Initiatives should be promoted offering support in implementing professional education programmes for women, encouraging them to attend higher education in the fields of science, technology and IT.

Moreover, the Commission should come forward with an ambitious, **comprehensive package of legislative and non-legislative measures regarding work-life balance** as part of the Commission Work Programme 2017.

Member States are also called upon to:

- tackle the gender equality issue, sexism and gender stereotypes in their education systems;
- move towards the **individualisation of rights in social equity policy**;
- take urgent action to close the gender pay-gap;
- strive towards establishing a European Child Guarantee, which would ensure that every European child at risk of poverty has access to free healthcare, free education, free childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition;
- take measures to encourage men to share equally in domestic responsibilities and in caring for children and other dependants;
- **take measures to prevent and respond to all types of violence against women** and gender-based violence and to put in place further prevention strategies;
- **include measures to protect women and LGBTI people** against harassment in the workplace.

Women in management: Members reiterated their call on the Council for a swift adoption of the directive on gender balance among non-executive directors of listed companies.

Violence towards women: Members considered that rape and sexual violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, domestic violence, so-called honour crimes and state-sanctioned gender discrimination, constitute **persecution and should be considered as valid reasons for seeking asylum in**

the EU. They repeated their calls on the Member States to put an immediate end to the detention of children, pregnant and nursing women and survivors of rape, sexual violence and trafficking.

Members called on the Commission and the Member States to introduce zero-tolerance policies in relation to all forms of violence, including domestic violence.

They stressed the fact that women must have **control over their sexual and reproductive health and rights**. Therefore, measures should taken to guarantee ready access for women to voluntary family planning and the full range of reproductive and sexual health services, including **contraception and abortion**.

In this regard, Members considered that the denial of life-saving sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortion, amounts to a grave breach of fundamental human rights.

Infringement procedures in cases of failure to implement the relevant legislation: lastly, Members called on the Commission to monitor the implementation of existing EU gender equality legislation in the Member States more effectively, while highlighting the necessity of initiating infringement procedures in cases of failure to implement the relevant legislation.