

Women and their roles in rural areas

2016/2204(INI) - 08/03/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report draft by Marijana PETIR (EPP, HR) and Maria Lidia SENRA RODRÍGUEZ (GUE/NGL, ES) on women and their roles in rural areas.

The report has been adopted pursuant to [Rule 55](#) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament (Joint committee procedure).

The report recalled that the economic crisis has affected the European Union and has had a severe impact on many rural areas and regions. Women directly experience the impact of the crisis in the management of their farms and homes.

Moreover, women represent slightly less than 50 % of the total working-age population in the rural areas of the EU, but only about 45 % of the total economically active population. Many are never registered as unemployed or included in unemployment statistics and no clear figures exist on women's involvement in farming as owners or employees.

Promoting women in rural areas: Members stressed that female entrepreneurship is a major sustainable development pillar for rural areas and should therefore be promoted, in particular, through education and vocational training, promotion of female ownership, entrepreneurs' networks and access to investment and credit, promotion of their representation in managerial bodies, and through creating the opportunities necessary to support young, self-employed, part-time and often low-paid women.

The Commission and the Member States are called upon to promote access to the labour market for women in rural areas as a priority in its future rural development policies.

In this regard, Member States are called on to:

- include in their rural development programmes strategies focusing specifically on women's contribution to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
- make more targeted use and raise awareness of the European Progress Microfinance Facility, to use EAFRD-specific measures in favour of women's employment;
- promote information and technical assistance measures and an exchange of good practices between Member States concerning the establishment of a professional status for spouses in farming, enabling them to enjoy individual rights, including, in particular, maternity leave, social insurance against accidents at work, access to training and retirement pension rights.

Members hoped that a better understanding of the situation of women in rural areas will allow the development of a **European Charter for Women Farmers** in the medium term, defining this concept, identifying direct and indirect forms of discrimination against women in rural areas and positive discrimination measures to eliminate them.

Specific measures should be taken to promote **training and employment** and safeguard the rights of the most vulnerable groups of women with specific needs, such as women with disabilities, migrant women, including seasonal migrants, refugees and minorities, victims of gender-based violence, women with little or no training and single mothers, etc.

Gender equality in farming: the report encouraged the Member States to promote equality between women and men in the various management and representation bodies. It also encouraged Member States to fully implement the existing legislative acts on equal treatment of women and men, including in social security and maternity and parental leave matters. Effective measures should be taken to reduce the existing gender pay and pensions gaps.

Education: given that the inclusion of women and girls in education and lifelong learning, particularly in areas of science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM), as well as in entrepreneurship is necessary for achieving gender equality in the agricultural and food production sectors, Members called for:

- adequate informational material on support possibilities specifically aimed at women farmers and women in rural areas;
- full access to education and vocational training in agriculture and all related sectors;
- the involvement of women with higher-level qualifications in agriculture, livestock-raising and forestry to be encouraged, and facilitated in so doing by training programmes to develop activities linked to the provision of advisory services to farms and innovation.

Funding and land acquisition: Member States are called upon to facilitate equitable access to land, ensure ownership and inheritance rights and facilitate access to credit for women. They encouraged, further, the Member States to address the issue of land grabbing and land concentration at EU level. New models of **agricultural credit** which have become possible in the context of close cooperation between the Commission and the European Investment Bank have been highlighted.

Lastly, Members stressed that better use should be made of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund to expand and upgrade transport infrastructure and to provide a secure energy supply and reliable high-speed broadband infrastructure and services in rural areas.