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

2016/2249(INI) - 14/03/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 369 votes to 188, with 133 a resolution on the equality between women and men in the European Union in 2014-2015.

Parliament 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** and into the implementation of EU measures and programmes, and to carry out gender impact assessments when setting up any new policy.

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.

Parliament also called for the inclusion of overall and stronger gender mainstreaming therein, addressing the structural causes of female poverty, in particular in the framework of formulating the country-specific recommendations in the context of the European semester.

It also called for poverty to be tackled among women, in particular among older women, single mothers, women victims of gender-based violence, women with disabilities, migrant women and women refugees.

New initiatives focusing on women: Parliament 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 is called on to put forward, an **ambitious, comprehensive package of legislative and non-legislative measures regarding work-life balance** as part of the Commission Work Programme 2017, taking into account the announced European pillar of social rights, and including the revision of existing Maternity Leave Directive 92/85/EEC and Parental Leave Directive 2010/18/EU as well as the proposals for directives on paternity leave and carer's leave.

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:** in this context, Parliament called for the recast of the 2006 Equal Treatment Directive;
- 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.

Parliament called on Poland, Croatia and Romania to step up their efforts in providing formal child care in order to contribute to striking a better balance between the private and professional lives of workers. It reasserted its call on the Commission and the Member States to strive towards establishing a **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.

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

Violence towards women: Parliament 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. It repeated its call 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.

Parliament repeated its 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**, and for appropriate psychological and health support to be made available, provided by gender-appropriate professionals such as psychologists, social workers, nurses and doctors who have been suitably trained for such emergencies.

It stated that women must have **control over their sexual and reproductive health and rights**. It called on all the Member States to guarantee ready access for women to voluntary family planning and the full range of reproductive and sexual health services, including contraception and **safe and legal abortion**. Public awareness actions should be undertaken with the objective of making men and women fully aware of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to sexual and reproductive matters. It considered that the denial of life-saving sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortion, amounts to a **grave breach of fundamental human rights**.

Members also stressed the importance of active prevention, education and information policies for teenagers, young people and adults to ensure that EU citizens benefit from good sexual and reproductive health and avoid sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. They encouraged the competent authorities in the Member States to promote gender equality in their comprehensive sex and relationship education programmes, including teaching girls and boys about relationships based on consent, respect and reciprocity, as well as in sport and leisure activities, where stereotypes and expectations based on gender can affect the self-image, health, acquisition of skills, intellectual development, social integration and identity formation of girls and boys.

Parliament called, once again, on the Commission to set up a **European monitoring centre on gender violence** (along the lines of the current European Institute for Gender Equality), to be led by a European coordinator for the prevention of violence against women and girls.

It also called on the Commission and the Member States to include measures to protect women and LGBTI people against harassment in the workplace.

Towards an overall anti-discrimination strategy: lastly, Parliament invited the Commission to develop a broader equality strategy, including a horizontal directive to tackle discrimination, with a view to eliminating gender-based discrimination in all its forms. It urged the Council to reach a common position as soon as possible on the proposal for a Council directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age, gender or sexual orientation, which has been blocked since Parliament adopted its position thereon on 2 April 2009.