Measures to prevent and combat mobbing and sexual harassment at workplace, in public spaces, and political life in the EU

2018/2055(INI) - 11/09/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 528 votes to 48 with 115 abstentions, a resolution on measures to prevent and combat mobbing and sexual harassment at workplace, in public spaces, and political life in the EU. Parliament welcomed the new widespread public debate and, in particular, initiatives such as the #MeToo movement and strongly supported all the women and girls who have participated in the campaign. It recalled that, according to the EU-wide FRA study of 2014 entitled 'Violence against women', **one in three women** have experienced physical or sexual violence during their adult lives, and that up to 55 % of women have been sexually harassed in the EU.

General recommendations: stressing that sexual harassment is a violation of human rights, Parliament called on the Commission to submit a **proposal for a directive** to tackle all forms of violence against women and girls and gender-based violence. Members noted that women in the EU are not equally protected against gender-based violence and sexual and psychological harassment owing to differing policies and legislation across the Member States. The draft directive should therefore **include common definitions of the different types of violence against women**, including an updated and comprehensive definition of harassment (be it sexual or otherwise) and mobbing, and common legal standards on criminalising this violence. The Commission was also asked to present a **comprehensive EU strategy** against all forms of gender-based violence, including the sexual harassment and abuse of women and girls, drawing on testimonies in the form of women's stories and first-hand experience.

Furthermore, Parliament called on the Commission to:

- monitor the correct implementation of the EU directives prohibiting sexual harassment;
- compile examples of best practices in combating sexual and psychological harassment and harassment on grounds of pregnancy and motherhood in the workplace;
- obtain a clear picture of the issue of sexual harassment across the EU with better and scientifically more robust studies, including new challenges such as cyber bullying;
- ensure the systematic collection of gender- and age-disaggregated, comparable data on cases of sexual and gender-based discrimination and psychological harassment, including cyber harassment, at national, regional and local level;
- tackle emerging forms of gender-based violence, such as online harassment.

Violence in the workplace: Members noted that **reporting sexual harassment** at work could in many cases lead to the victim's dismissal or isolation within the workplace. A 2016 study found that four in five women who had been harassed had not reported the harassment to their employer. Parliament stressed the urgent need to understand the barriers women face in reporting cases of sexual harassment, and to offer **full support to women in reporting cases without fear of possible consequences.** Parliament stressed that companies should have a **zero tolerance** approach to sexual harassment and policies conducive to it. It called on Member States to introduce measures to prevent and combat violence and harassment at the workplace through:

- policies which set out prevention measures;
- effective, transparent and confidential procedures to deal with complaints;
- strong and dissuasive sanctions for perpetrators,
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- comprehensive information and training courses to ensure that workers understand policies and procedures,
- support for companies to draw up action plans to implement all these measures.

Both public and private companies should be required to organise **mandatory** training on sexual harassment and bullying for all employees and those in management roles.

Violence in political life: Members called on all political parties, including those represented in the European Parliament, to take concrete steps to tackle this problem, including the introduction of action plans and the revision of internal party regulations to introduce a zero-tolerance policy, preventive measures, procedures to deal with complaints and adequate **sanctions for perpetrators** of sexual harassment and the bullying of women in politics. National and regional parliaments and local councils must fully support victims in the framework of internal procedures and/or with the police, and maintain a confidential register of cases over time. Parliament wanted to see **mandatory training** for all staff and members on respect and dignity.

Violence in public spaces: Members pointed out that sexual harassment is increasingly being carried out using new technologies, enabling perpetrators to feel safe under cover of anonymity. They called on the Commission to come up with a **definition of public space**, taking into account evolving communication technologies, and therefore to include in that definition 'virtual' public spaces such as social networks and websites.

Parliament highlighted that education on gender equality at every level is a fundamental tool in avoiding and eliminating these forms of misconduct, and reducing cultural tolerance of sexual harassment.

It asked Member States to:

- consider introducing specific legislation on harassment in public spaces, including intervention programmes, with a specific focus on the role of intervention on the part of bystanders;
- encourage awareness-raising campaigns in secondary schools and to include the issue of cyberbullying in educational curricula in schools and universities;
- establish a report system in schools to keep track of all cases of cyberbullying and continue the successful Delete Cyberbullying campaign and Safer Internet initiative;
- remind internet service providers of their duty to protect their online consumers by addressing cases of repetitive abuse or stalking.